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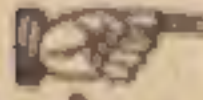
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MOCCASIN BILL:

OR,

CUNNING SERPENT THE OJIBWAH.

A ROMANCE OF BIG STONE LAKE.

BY PAUL BIBBS.

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MOCCASIN BILL,

OR,

CUNNING SERPENT, THE OJIBWAH.

CHAPTER I.

PROLOGUE.

AT the time of which we write, the "dark, gloomy forest" extended in an unbroken line from the mouth of the St. Peter's far up into British America.

It was spring, and the rivers and their tributaries were much swollen by the melted snow, making progression on them a matter of more difficulty than it had been in the fall of the year. This was especially the case with a structure which, on the day which this narrative opens, was being forced by the united exertions of three negroes up the Minnesota.

Apart from the fact that the structure mentioned was heavily laden, it had been built with any thing but an eye to speed, being, in fact, nothing more than a few logs, lashed together with pieces of rope, thus forming a sort of rude raft.

Besides the three negroes, the raft contained a white man, some forty years of age, his wife and two children. The former was well dressed, in the garb of civilized life, and would have at once been taken for what he was—a man of education and wealth. His wife was a woman some four years his junior, and, like him, well dressed, and showed that she had been brought up in good society.

The two had resided in one of the Southern States, where they owned a considerable amount of property. The reason for their being on this no less dangerous than difficult journey was on account of the delicate state of the lady's

health, she having, for a number of years, evinced symptoms of a consumptive character. They had learned that the climate of Minnesota was considered excellent for that disease, and were now on their way to the present city of Pembina.

The two children were aged respectively five and seven years—the former a boy, the latter a girl.

It was late in the afternoon, and those aboard the raft were on the look-out for a convenient landing-place, where they could pass the night.

“Oh, dear!” said the lady, in a despairing voice, “this is a terribly tedious mode of traveling.”

“True, my dear,” returned her husband, “as the river is swollen, and the current rapid, our progress is therefore slow.”

The gentleman had scarcely said these words, when, from a point about half a mile above, a canoe, containing a single occupant, suddenly shot out from the shore. The occupant—an Indian—kept the prow of his craft in a straight line until he had reached the center of the stream, when, with a single stroke of his paddle, he headed down the river.

On making this discovery, the three negroes showed unmistakable signs of fear. Each cast a look behind, as if in search of some avenue for escape, at the same time ceasing to propel the raft. Noticing this, Mr. Hautville—such was the gentleman’s name—ordered them to resume their labor, at the same moment examining a fine rifle which was lying beside him.

“If this Indian be a friend, all right; if an enemy, I am prepared to meet him.”

“Massa,” said one of the negroes, “dat air red-skin air a dangerous-lookin’ pussun. Better fire now, an’ hev’ de fust shot.”

“No, Sancho,” responded his master. “I shall not fire until he openly declares himself to be an enemy. He may be some friendly Indian guide.”

The negro shook his head, dubiously, and it was plainly evident that neither of the three at all relished their situation. By this the canoe and raft had so neared each other that not a dozen rods lay between them. The young war-

rior dipped his paddle deep into the water, and by a slight exertion kept his canoe stationary for a few seconds, while he silently surveyed the movements of those upon the raft. Though young, the physiognomy of this savage was brutal and cunning in the extreme; and such was in perfect keeping with his character; brutal as a fiend, subtle as a serpent, he had earned the name among his tribe of the "Cunning Serpent."

"Ugh!" he said to himself, as a look of deadly hatred flashed across his features; "the Cunning Serpent is again fortunate. Here are more pale-faces upon whom to show his hatred, more scalps to grace his lodge. The Ojibwahs have sung the praises of the Cunning Serpent, but he will show them that he is capable of achieving greater deeds yet."

With a look of triumph, and a yell pealing from his lips, the savage rose to his feet, at the same time dropping his paddle and grasping his bow. It took but a single instant for him to fix an arrow to the string, and the messenger of death was sent on its way. It pierced the side of the lady on the raft, and she rolled over backward—a corpse.

Her husband, with a scream of despair, took a quick aim at the assassin, and fired. The demon saw the movement, and, throwing himself in the bottom of the canoe, thus avoided the shot. The bullet whistled by harmlessly above his head. With another cry of despair, Mr. Hautville threw himself on his knees beside his dead wife and essayed to raise her up; and at the same time the savage rose to his feet and let fly another arrow. But, owing to the quickness of his aim, he missed his mark.

Turning to the terrified negroes, Hautville commanded them to pole the raft ashore as quickly as possible. Two of them prepared to execute the order, but the third, a huge, fierce-looking one, refused. Glancing about the raft, his eyes fell upon an ax. Dropping the pole which he had been using in propelling the raft, with a sudden movement he grasped the ax, and with a few blows severed the rope which had bound the logs together. Just at that moment an arrow pierced the breast of their master, and he rolled over backward into the stream.

With a cry of terror, each of the negroes jumped astride a log, and the current carried them down the stream.

Nearly overcome with terror, the two children screamed, their cries echoing from shore to shore. They were seated astride one of the larger logs which had served to form the raft, and to which they instinctively clung with a deathlike tenacity.

Dropping his bow, and again grasping his paddle, the Cunning Serpent started after in full pursuit. His light craft shot rapidly over the water, and in a few minutes he was in such close proximity to the two children that it needed but the stretching forth of an arm to touch them.

"Ugh!" he said within himself, whilst for a moment his eyes forgot their savage look, and he gazed upon the girl with a fixed look of admiration. "The maiden is beautiful, and in a few summers will be fit to join the Ojibwah maidens in their dances. She must go with me. My lodge is empty. I shall be her father."

Extending his hand, the Cunning Serpent seized the girl by her arm, and, unmindful of her screams, lifted her into the canoe. At the same instant the crack of a rifle rung out, and a bullet struck the Indian's paddle. The savage gazed in the direction whence the shot came for a moment, then, with a sudden and powerful stroke of his paddle, sent the canoe toward the opposite shore. This he soon reached. He landed, seized his young captive in his arms, and disappeared in the bushes.

In the meantime, the log upon which was the young boy, hurried onward by the swift current, was carried down the stream. But he was not lost. Before long after his sister had disappeared from his sight, another canoe shot out from the shore, containing the athletic form of a trapper, and who hurried after the boy with all his energy.

He was not very long in reaching the lad, and, with a few cheering words, lifted him into his canoe. Then he turned his craft about and headed for the shore.

Arrived there, he took the boy out, and kneeling down, wiped the fast-falling tears from the child's eyes with the frock of his hunting-shirt.

"There, my poor boy," he said, "you are safe. Cry no

more. Listen. You must never forget that savage ! never ! Here, on my knees, I tell you to remember him. You are young, but the day will come when you will be able to avenge your parents' deaths, if I do not before you. I know that savage well. He is called the Cunning Serpent. Never forget it, my boy ; never forget it !"

CHAPTER II.

A DEFEATED PLOT.

SIXTEEN years have elapsed since the events related in the preceding chapter occurred.

About two hundred miles from Big Stone Lake—the source of the Minnesota—there stood upon the banks of the river a settlement called Blue Creek.

The settlement was not a large one, and like most others of that period—having first been established as a trading-post, and composed of a mixed community of husbandmen and trappers, the latter forming the majority. Strictly speaking, all of the male inhabitants followed the business of trapping wild, fur-bearing animals, inasmuch as it served to greatly relieve the monotony of the long winters, besides obtaining them that which they could barter with the river traders for various household commodities. Farming was not carried on on an extensive scale, the products barely exceeding the home demands.

Like most frontier settlements, Blue Creek had its block-house, or fort. The structure was a commodious one, square, and surrounded by a circle of high palisades, an arrangement well known by the name of stockade.

Besides being the temporary residence of one or two families who had lately arrived in Blue Creek, and who had been deterred from erecting for themselves a cabin by the lateness of the season—for it was late in November—the fort was occupied by a man named Captain Treville. The Captain was a man just in the prime of life, possessed of a fine and com

manding person, a pair of keen gray eyes, and had won the respect and love of all who knew him. He had been elected by common consent ruler of the village, and had been found to be, on trial, the right man for the situation. At that period, the Sioux and Dacotahs, and the almost as powerful family of the Ojibwahs, occupied the vast territory of Minnesota, numbering, it has been asserted, nearly sixty thousand.

For this reason, it required no small amount of both tact and energy to successfully combat and defeat the machinations of the savages, in order for the hardy pioneer to sustain his ground, and preserve his life. Numerous plots had been attempted to destroy Blue Creek, but as Captain Treville had each time been apprised of the fact by the various scouts and spies he employed, each attempt had proved futile.

Among the scouts and trappers who made the settlement in question their home, was one well known by the sobriquet of Moccasin Bill, though for what reason it is beyond our power to state. Well known among the French and half-breeds in that region as one of the most expert of "*Coueurs des Bois*," or Wood Rangers—and being a man of remarkable development of muscle, he was a noted person among his associates and acquaintances.

On the day on which this chapter opens, as he was seated in his room, engaged in polishing the barrel of his rifle, he was summoned to the apartment of Captain Treville, the one who brought the message at the same time adding that the trapper's attendance was desired at once.

Though Moccasin Bill was one of the best scouts the country has ever seen, Captain Treville had never, for some unknown reason, trusted him with any post of importance, when in time of an outbreak, but, on the contrary, had openly ignored all proffered assistance from him. In fact, there seemed to be a secret animosity between the two, which time only served to increase.

Great, therefore, was the trapper's surprise when the message of which we have spoken was given him, and which he quietly considered for a few moments, before either accepting or refusing.

"Well," he at last said to the messenger, "I suppose it is

something important, or the captain would not have sent for me. You may tell his honor I will come."

The messenger quitted the room, while the trapper at once prepared for the interview. He wiped the oil and powdered pumice-stone from his gun-barrel with a piece of buck-skin, slung the weapon across his back, and strode from the apartment to that of Captain Treville.

Here he found the captain seated in an arm-chair, his face wearing a dark, troubled aspect. But the moment his eye met the face of the scout his features changed, and rising to his feet, he greeted the trapper with unexpected cordiality.

His advances were met with indifference; but, without appearing to notice this, Treville said:

"Sir, I am glad to see that you have let bygones be bygones, and have come to me at my wish. Why I wished to see you is this—I am, unfortunately, in possession of unpleasant news. I am informed—but I will read you the letter and you can judge for yourself."

Approaching a rude oaken table, Treville took from its surface a piece of thin, birchen bark, and upon which was written as follows:

"OTTER, Nov 26th 18—.

DEAR SIR :—We are surrounded on every side with a large number of Ojibwahs, commanded in person by their chief, Cunning Serpent. If you can do so, for God's sake send us relief, for we are starving. The Indian who bears this can be trusted. In haste.

J. LAMOIGNE.

"To Capt. Treville, Fort Blue Creek."

Treville read this aloud to the trapper, then laid it aside to hear the trapper's reply.

"Do you know this Lamoigne?" the latter asked.

"No; he is one of the villagers, no doubt."

"Probably. They wish aid. Do you intend to send it?"

"There's the point. I know not what to do. It may be a trap of their cunning chief. Besides, we are in constant danger of an attack ourselves. I wish your advice."

"The Indian who brought this message—is he in the fort?"

"Yes."

"Send for him. We may learn something by questioning him."

Treville himself left the room, and in a few moments returned with the Indian who had brought him the message. The savage was above the ordinary stature, of a dark, scowling visage, and who stepped forward with a bold, proud air. Moccasin Bill eyed him sharply, but his gaze was returned unflinchingly.

"Who wrote that message?" at length demanded the trapper.

"I know not," was the answer.

"How many are within the fort?"

"Enough to keep out the Ojibwahs, whose arrows are powerless against its strength," was the ready reply.

The trapper gazed at the Indian's face for a few seconds, as if to read his inmost thoughts; then, drawing Treville to one side; he said, in a low voice:

"His words seem fair enough, but the bearing of this savage is enough to convince me that he knows more than he chooses to tell."

"I certainly was not favorably impressed by his physiognomy, to say the least of it," returned the captain. "We may be wrong, but perhaps this note is a forgery."

"It is possible," said Moccasin Bill. "Yes, quite possible. Let us bid the savage be gone, informing him that we will send the necessary aid. Then I will track him—track him, if necessary, as far as Otter itself, and thus ascertain, myself, how matters really stand."

"Very good!" exclaimed Captain Treville. "I like the idea."

During this short conference, the savage had stood eying the two with a deep scowl, his oblique orbs flashing like an angry snake's.

Approaching him, Treville said:

"Tell those who sent you that they shall have assistance. You may go."

"Wayuga waits," was the answer.

"Whyfore?"

"That he may guide the pale-faces by a secret path he knows to those who sent him here."

"Are the Ojibwahs more cunning than the pale-face scouts?" asked Treville, in answer.

"The Ojibwahs are many. Only one way can relief approach—by a secret path which Wayuga knows."

"This is enough to further confirm my suspicions," said the trapper, in a whisper. Then, raising his voice, he said: "Ojibwah, we have spoken, and will do as we have said."

The savage knew by the tone in which these words were spoken that he had nothing to hope for by staying, so he drew his blanket closer about him, and haughtily strode from the room.

Through the loop-holes in the room the two men watched his retreat. He passed outside the stockade, and strode over the clearing with a firm, proud step.

Reaching the edge of the forest, he turned about and faced the fort. He produced a tomahawk, and, circling it over his head, yelled forth the Ojibwah war-cry—"Ho yo-chee!"

CHAPTER III.

HENRY HAUTVILLE.

THE instant the savage disappeared in the forest, the trapper left the fort, with the avowed intention of tracking the red-skin to his haunts. That the note was a forgery, and the Ojibwah an enemy, was now no longer to be doubted.

Plunging into the forest, the trapper was not long in striking the trail of the retreating Indian. This he followed, at the same time exercising all his sagacity in order not to be led into any trap which might have been laid.

Throughout the day, the sky had been overcast with dark, heavy clouds, precursing, as the weather was somewhat cold, snow. Therefore, the trapper was hardly a mile from the fort, when a low wind began to shake the leafless trees, bringing with it a hurricane of snow.

This served to increase, of course, the distinctness of the trail, but Moccasin Bill did not take advantage of it by increasing his speed. He was far too wary for that.

At a distance of two miles from the fort, he suddenly came

across a small lake. This was frozen over, and the trail of the Indian showed he had crossed over it on the ice. On ascertaining this, the scout stood for a moment deliberating as to whether or not he should follow the trail, and cross the lake, or else skirt around it, and again strike the trail on the other side. He finally chose the latter.

Marking well the bearings of the savage's track, he skirted around the margin of the lake, taking care to constantly keep in the cover of the snow-capped bushes.

Arrived on the opposite shore to the one from which he had started, Moccasin Bill again struck the trail, and in the exact spot his sagacity had led him to suppose he would.

Leaving the margin of the lake, he at length aimed at a spot where the trail was crossed by another one. Bending low over it, the scout examined it closely. It appeared somewhat fresher than the one he had been following, and, moreover, to have been made by a white man.

Satisfying himself with the reflection that it was probably some trapper, like himself, he continued on. But ere long, the same trail again met his view, but, this time, *following that of the savage.*

Wondering within himself who the man was, the scout slightly increased his speed, grasping his rifle near the end of its barrel, and allowing the stock to trail on the ground.

After another quarter of a mile had been passed over, the two trails led him up the face of a steep hill, covered with sumach and leafless hazels. By this time, the snow was some inches in depth, and rendered progression somewhat tiresome. Arrived at the summit of the hill, the eye of Moccasin Bill fell upon the rugged top of another one. The two hills gradually sloped downward, forming a sort of narrow ravine at the bottom. Within this ravine, a sight met the gaze of the trapper which was at once unexpected and unwelcome. Among the bushes and saplings two men were engaged in a fierce and deadly combat—one was a white man, young and athletic, his antagonist, the savage whom the scout had been following from the fort. The bow of the savage was at his back, but he fought with his hatchet. So, too, did the young man, whose rifle was lying upon the ground. Both were perfect masters of the weapons they used, and it was

impossible to say which of the two would prove the victor. Ever changing their position, in their endeavors to get the advantage of the other, Moccasin Bill saw that a rifle-shot from where he stood would be as likely to prove dangerous to one as to the other, so he restrained his impatience, and commenced to hurry down the hill.

Just as he did so the Ojibwah aimed a savage blow at his antagonist's head, but it was parried successfully with the young man's hatchet. The force of the blow, however, was tremendous, and both weapons flew like a flash from their owners' hands. The savage glanced back. His tomahawk lay not a dozen feet from him. It *might* be reached. But before he could put his resolve into execution, a blow between the eyes from his antagonist's muscular arm made him see for a few seconds, more stars than he had ever been able to see on the most cloudless night. Half blinded, he stretched forth his hand, and grasped hold of the young man. The strong savage drew his enemy toward him, and both became locked in a fierce embrace. Over and over the snow and among the bushes they rolled, the sinewy red-skin every moment seeming to gain strength by the combat, while his antagonist seemed to be as rapidly giving way.

Moccasin Bill saw this, and, as he strode down the hill, he raised his voice, and encouraged the young man to keep up for a few moments longer. The savage heard the voice, and glancing up the hill, he perceived his new enemy. With a desperate wrench, the Ojibwah freed himself from the young man's feeble hold, and, with an exclamation of defiance, disappeared in the bushes. The artful rascal dodged like lightning from one bush to another, making his way to the debouchure of the ravine, which, when reached, he passed through, and disappeared.

By the time that Moccasin Bill reached the base of the hill, the young man had recovered his legs and his breath, and stood awaiting the close approach of the trapper with a mien expressing neither joy nor gratitude.

"Well," the young man said, as the other halted some few feet from him, "it seems I am indebted to you for my life; but for you, the savage must have strangled me. Thank you."

The trapper affected not to notice the cold manner in which these words were spoken, but in this he illy succeeded. Their effect upon him was plainly apparent.

"You certainly had a worthy opponent," he answered, calmly : "but, after all, you might have gained the victory over him. Therefore, I claim nothing for myself, Henry Hautville."

"I would ask you a question : how came you to arrive here at such a critical moment?"

"I was following the trail of the savage, who came with a false message to the fort," was the ready reply.

"Do you know this savage, sir?"

"No. As far as I can remember, I never set eyes on him before. But, judging from his dress, he must be a chief."

"You are right," replied the young man. "He is a chief. I learned that but a few days since. You informed me, a moment since, that you were following the savage. And why?"

"For reasons which may easily be guessed."

"I understand. You wished to learn if he had any followers near. Beyond the hill whose summit you see above the tree-tops yonder, two hundred Ojibwah lodges dot the snowy ground. These savages, incited to it by him who but a short time since unfortunately escaped us, are on the eve of rebellion. They are from the Red River of the North, driven from the country by a severe famine, and expect to find food and scalps in plenty. They have captives—plenty of them. These they intend to exchange for food ; but, if unsuccessful, they will have recourse to the knife and tomahawk. I learned this a few nights ago, while in an Ojibwah camp in disguise."

Forgetting the coldness of the young man's greeting, the trapper gazed upon him with unconcealed admiration.

"Henry," he said, "you are indeed worthy of me—me who first learned you to load a rifle and to tell the track of an Ojibwah."

For a moment, a smile illuminated the young man's features ; but this disappeared, and he again assumed his wonted composure.

The two men conversed for a few moments longer, but without any thing being said which strictly belongs to this narrative.

After that they shouldered their rifles, and returned hastily to the fort, in order to lay what Harry Hautville knew regarding the savages before Captain Treville.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CAPTIVES.

WHATEVER may be said charging the pioneers of the west with cruelty equaling that of their savage foes, it is a question whether any company of pioneers ever attacked a savage unprovoked.

That outlaws from justice have done so is true ; but as for the sturdy pioneer, he only raised his rifle against a foe when it became a matter of *necessity*. This was exactly the case of the settlers of Blue Creek when, two days from the scene we have just related, a large band of warriors, squaws and children filed into the opening, and without leave or apology, pitched their wigwams upon it.

The settlement thus suddenly assumed a scene of unusual commotion. The warriors were assembled in knots here and there, smoking their long calumets, while the squaws and children were running hither and thither, shouting and gesticulating until it seemed a veritable Pandemonium. This contrasted strangely with the settlers, who, though no less on the move, acted quietly and quickly. Inside the stockade, a busy scene was going on. A party of men, armed with axes and shovels, were engaged in testing each of the palisades, in order to see if they were firm, and likely to stand a rush of the enemy, if it occurred. Sentries were to be seen on the parapet of the fort, and thus the generally quiet settlement suddenly had assumed a warlike appearance.

All day did this scene continue, and when night came a shrill cry from one of the savages drew the warriors together

in one common crowd. They remained in this situation for some time, conversing, and ever and anon violently gesticulating, when a sudden commotion was observed among them, and a dozen warriors stepped from out the crowd. They advanced toward the fort, one of them holding up an arrow to which had been attached a piece of white cloth. This was intended, of course, for a flag of truce.

Arrived near the gate of the stockade, the party halted before the sentry, who, with cocked rifle, refused them admittance until he received orders from the fort to do so. The order from Captain Treville soon arrived, and the dusky crowd passed through into the stockade. Proceeding forward a few steps they again came to a halt, this time seating themselves in a semicircle on the ground.

Scarcely had this been done, when an invitation from the captain arrived, desiring them to come inside the fort.

“Let the Ojibwah warriors come inside the fort, where the council-fire is kindled, and the snow will not freeze their feet.”

The leader of the party, who was the very savage who visited the fort in the guise of a messenger two days before, backed by one or two others, was at first opposed to this plan, fearing to become the victims of treachery. As the weather was cold, the others were in favor of it, and at last these latter gained the point. Rising to their feet, the savages were led inside the fort to a large apartment, and on the ground floor. In the center of the floor—which was the ground itself—was burning a huge fire of logs, the smoke from which made its exit through a circular aperture in the ceiling.

Seated in a half-circle round this fire were nearly a hundred villagers and trappers, among them being Captain Treville, Henry Hautville and Moccasin Bill.

Gliding into the room like specters, the gleam of the fire giving their painted visages a demon-like aspect, the Indians formed themselves in a position opposite the trappers, the two arcs completing the circle.

The calumet, the wonted prelude to an Indian council, was produced, filled, lit, and passed from mouth to mouth, each warrior taking one or two whiffs, and breathing forth the smoke through his nostrils. The pipe circulated slowly, and,

adding the time it consumed in twice or thrice refilling it, it was some time before the "smoke" was ended.

But at last it was over, and the monotony was broken by one of the savages rising to his feet. Contrasted with the rest of his brethren, this savage's appearance and mien were intelligent and pleasant. He was tall, well-built, and over his almost Roman nose towered up a high, massive forehead. It was easy to perceive that he was the diplomatist of his tribe, being eloquent, and subtle as the fox.

Standing straight as an arrow, and gesticulating with his right arm, which had been drawn from beneath his blanket, the savage began his harangue, in very fair English.

"Pale-faces, I am a warrior of the Ojibwahs. We come from toward the setting sun—from the land of the river whose waters are red. The great Manitou has been angry with his children. Their corn ripened not in the fields, and their squaws and children were starving in their lodges. We are hungry. We want corn. We have captives, and these we will swap for food to feed our hungry women."

"Where are your captives?" demanded Treville.

"In our lodges," was the answer.

"Very well. If you have any whom you have lately taken, we can make a fair exchange, I think. But we must see them first."

On hearing this, the Indians conversed together for a time, in a low tone. At length one of them—a young warrior—rose to his feet and strode from the room.

In a short time he returned with what was represented to be their captives. But, alas! if such they were, they were willing ones. There were seven of them—one a young man, the other six females. That they belonged to the Anglo-American race was not to be doubted, but their browned faces and harsh features showed they had stood the exposure of many a summer's sun, and been the witnesses of many a savage scene. Carried into captivity by the ruthless savage in their childhood, they had long since forgotten father, mother—all; and now they believed themselves to be, like their companions, children of the forest.

"Are these the captives you mentioned?" demanded Treville, in an angry tone.

"They are. Are there not enough?"

"They will not do. The red-man may be cunning, but he can not deceive us. These are no longer like us, but you. If we were to give you corn for them, they would escape to the woods at the first opportunity. This you well know."

He spoke seriously, and from his decision the savages saw there was no appeal. Accordingly, they once more laid their heads together, and whispers and angry looks circled round. The upshot of this was, the young warrior who had brought in the so-called captives at last rose to his feet again, and bidding those he had brought follow him, quitted the room.

What was to next transpire? Trappers and villagers awaited the result with curiosity, if not with impatience. As for the savages, they sat eying their opponents with unconcealed looks of hate and mistrust. Hatred for the whites was in their souls, and not a few would have been pleased to hear their chief peal forth the signal for them to launch forth the deadly tomahawks concealed beneath their striped blankets.

This time the Indian was absent a somewhat longer time than before, but when he at length returned, he was accompanied by five females, all under twenty years of age. Unlike the others these were to be pitied. Their white skins and haggard features told that it was but lately they had become the inmates of the lodges of the forest robber! These, with one accord, both villagers and trappers were resolved to rescue, cost what it might.

When the noise which this fresh arrival had occasioned was somewhat subsided, Treville asked the Indian orator what amount of corn they expected for each of the captives.

"Five sacks," was the reply.

At this both trappers and villagers burst into a laugh.

"Is the price too large?" angrily demanded one of the Indians.

"Are the eyes of the Ojibwahs like the bat's at mid-day?" mockingly returned Treville. "Do they take these young squaws for white braves?"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed the trappers, delighting to taunt their foes.

"Drat my eyes," sung out one, "if these red-skins don't sot

these weemen up next, an' show us how they kin fire at a mark. He! he!"

The truth of the matter was, the villagers would have paid the amount willingly sooner than have let the girls be carried again into hopeless captivity. But their own crops had been small, the winter promised to be an unusually long and severe one, and it was but natural that they should try and secure the captives for as low a sum as possible.

"Yes," continued Treville, when the outburst of mirth had subsided, "the price you ask is a large one. You ask five—we will give you two."

It was now the savages' turn to laugh, which they did in a manner which contrasted strangely with their usually quiet bearing, and would have convinced those who believe that "an Indian never laughs" of their fallacy.

But, despite the outward hilarity of the savages, a careful observer could not have failed to penetrate the dark thoughts beneath. The Ojibwahs knew they were a strong party, but still they were not sure about their being able to come off victorious, in case of a battle. This was the only reason that prevented them from rising to their feet, quitting the fort, and thus bringing the negotiations at once to an end.

However, each party somewhat cooling down, and after a great deal of shrewdness had been displayed on both sides, it was arranged that the villagers were to pay five sacks of corn for the eldest of the girls, and three for each of the others. This had satisfactorily been arranged between both parties, when a little incident occurred which at once put a different face on the matter.

CHAPTER V.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

MEASURES were about to be taken for the delivery of the ransom to the savages, when the voice of Moccasin Bill arrested the attention of all.

"Are these all the captives you have?" he demanded of the savages.

"Ugh! Why should we keep any back?" was the reply

"That is no answer," returned the trapper.

"We have no other captives, except those you have seen."

"That is false, Ojibwah!" exclaimed Moccasin Bill, in a half-angry tone, rising to his feet as he spoke. "I know for certain that you ~~have~~ another captive. I saw her myself, and only this morning."

These words, of course, produced a sensation, not only among those of his own party, but among the savages also. Glances of mortification and anger went round, but the orator of the tribe replied with the greatest of *sang froid*:

"The pale face brave is mistaken. The squaw he saw could not have been a captive, since we have no more."

"Liar!" yelled the now infuriated trapper, at what he knew to be a bare faced falsehood. "Liar! I say. Dare you let us search your lodges?"

"Perhaps you are mistaken," interposed Treville, before any of the savages had time to reply. "You are far too impetuous."

"Captain Treville," answered the trapper, turning quickly toward him, "thirty years' time spent in the forest has not served to destroy my sight so that I can not tell a white woman from a red one. I understand your motive for saying what you did; and, allow me to say, this is neither the time nor the place to exhibit your animosity toward me. You seem to have forgotten that the circumstances we are in, sir, should make us brothers, rather than enemies."

"Right, hoss—right!" echoed a dozen voices, as Moccasin Bill concluded this perhaps merited rebuke. There was not a trapper present who was not aware of the dislike which Treville had ever entertained for their noble-hearted companion.

"As I said before," continued the trapper, now addressing the savages, "dare you allow us to search your lodges?"

Up to this time the chief of the party had refrained from saying a word; but he now rose to his feet. Hautville regarded the savage with a vengeful look, for the remembrance of his late combat with him was fresh in his memory. As he sat there, he fancied he could feel the fingers of the chief clutching his throat, as they had done only two days before, and he longed to repay the insult.

Gazing upon his listeners with a proud air, the savage began:

"Pale-faces, you ask if we have any more captives. We have one, but it is impossible to give her up. She is mine, and it is I who refuse it."

"Let us, at least, see her," said Moccasin Bill.

"For why, I ask?" demanded the Ojibwah, in a bold voice. "Her skin is white, but she has the heart of an Ojibwah?"

"That makes no difference. We must see her."

"Yes, we must see her! We must see her!" echoed the hoarse voices of a dozen trappers.

The savages knew that those who spoke were men of their word, and they dare not refuse. They only numbered a dozen, and three times that number of rifle-barrels glistened by the light of the fire, while in the belts of not a few were to be seen displayed the stocks of pistols and the handles of knives.

As the low murmurs of dissatisfaction went round, it became apparent that the Ojibwahs were divided into two parties. One party wished to submit to the wishes of the trappers, the other was strongly against it. Among the latter was the chief. The discussion was long and animated, but at last the party who deemed it their wisest plan to produce the captive prevailed, and again the young warrior left the room. His return was awaited with both curiosity and impatience.

Who could the captive be, that Moccasin Bill had taken such an interest in her ? was more than once asked, but each time meeting with no answer.

But ere long the door of the council-room was again thrown open, and the young Indian entered, accompanied by a beautiful girl, arrayed in feathers and robes of white fawn-skin. Golden ear-rings hung from her ears, and hung round her neck was a heavy chain of gold. Her skirt and moccasins, with beads and stained porcupine-quills of many hues, were trimmed with a taste which never belonged to a savage belle. Her features, though browned with exposure to summer's heat and winter's chilling blasts, were purely Caucasian. Like those who stood near her, she was a captive, but of a far longer date than they.

Her appearance was the cause of extreme surprise, and loud murmurs of admiration were to be heard on every side.

In the mean while, Moccasin Bill, rising to his feet, and bidding Henry Hautville follow him, made his way toward the young girl. Coming to a standstill directly before her, he said :

“ Do you know your name ? ”

“ I am called by the Ojibwahs the White Lily,” she replied.

“ But that is not my real name.”

“ What is it ? ” asked the trapper.

“ Laura Hautville ! ”

“ I knew it ! ” cried the trapper. “ I knew it when first I saw you. Here, Henry, behold your sister ! ”

With a simultaneous cry, brother and sister, after a separation of sixteen years, flung themselves into each other's arms. Both well remembered the day that, long ago, saw them orphans—the day when she was borne into the forest, and he taken under the fatherly care of Moccasin Bill. For a few moments their joy was unspeakable.

The chief had been a silent spectator, up to this, of the scene. But now, with a howl of savage fury, he sprung toward the young girl, with the intention of parting her from her brother's embrace. But the sinewy arm of Moccasin Bill was stretched forth, and it served to hold the savage back.

“ Ugh ! you have not yet ransomed her, and she is mine.”

Being now close to the savage, for the first time, the scout scrutinized his features closely. Suddenly a gleam of intelligence shot across his face, indicative of the fact that he had made some discovery.

"I know you now," he said. "Wonder it is that I did not before. You are the Cunning Serpent—the murderer of the father and mother of the girl who, you say, belongs to you. Red-skinned devil! it is sixteen years ago since that scene, but it is as fresh upon my memory as though it were but yesterday!"

On hearing this terrible denunciation, a cry of fearful import burst from the trappers. Rifles were convulsively grasped, and loud murmurs of vengeance were to be heard on every side. It was the gathering of the clouds which foretell the tempest. The savages, too, were not idle. Murmurs were uttered, and looks of hatred flashed from face to face. The captives, as well, saw the impending combat, and, huddling together, they whimpered with fright. It is certain that, had the savages equaled the whites in number, they would have foreclosed at once. But their weakness served for a time to keep them back.

"How much do you want for this last captive?" demanded Treville of the Indian orator.

"Let the Cunning Serpent answer," was the reply. "She is his."

Treville then put the question to the chief. To the indignation of the trappers, he refused to yield her up for any price.

"No," he said, "she is mine, and all the corn in your barns will not buy her. She is to be the light of my lodge, and I can not give her up."

"We must have her! We must have her!" yelled fifty voices.

This was enough to frighten an ordinary man, but the savage's resolution was not so easily shaken. He cast forth a look of proud defiance, but replied nothing.

Rising to their feet, the savages prepared to leave the fort, motioning the trembling captives to follow them.

"What does this mean?" thundered Moccasin Bill. "Are not those captives ours? Did we not ransom them?"

"You did. But not the White Lily. She is ours."

The moment had come.

By a series of quick movements, the captives were got close to the door, which was opened, and then they, under the guidance of Henry Hautville, passed through. Then the door was again closed.

A howl of rage escaped from the savages at thus finding themselves outmaneuvered, and some of them even went so far as to give vent to whoops of vengeance.

"You refused to swap, and we are right in *taking* them," cried Treville. "If we were in your camp with captives, you would do the same as we have done."

Treville was right. "Do unto others as others do unto you" is a trapper's law.

The savages edged toward the door, and were suffered to pass through out of the fort. They were under the protection of a flag of truce, and, unless they were the first to raise up arms, they were not to be molested.

Once outside, their savage fury vented itself in loud whoops and demoniacal yells. Tomahawks were swung aloft, and the baffled warriors strode about the clearing in their striped blankets. But soon this scene changed, and preparations were at once begun for their quitting the village. The lodges were pulled down, closely packed, then hoisted upon the backs of the squaws, whose duty it was to perform this species of labor. This was done in an exceedingly short space of time, and in less than an hour, not an Indian was to be seen.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST SCENE.

WELL did the villagers know the import of this sudden exit. That the savages—at least the male portion—would return, was not to be doubted; and hurried preparations were begun for their reception.

The first thing to be aimed at was the removal of the grain

from the barns to the cellar of the fort. As this was already in sacks, and as there were plenty of helpers, the task would be neither a long nor a difficult one.

One of the barns was soon cleared of its contents, and then the second one was attacked. One of the villagers had ascended to the loft, when his companions suddenly heard him give vent to a sudden exclamation of surprise. A moment later, he appeared among them again, his face blanched with fear.

"The Indians!" he ejaculated. "They are not gone yet."

"Not gone? Impossible!"

"I tell you I saw some in the loft, just now."

The noise made had attracted the attention of a number of trappers, who, approaching, inquired the cause.

"Moulton, here, says there are savages in the loft," said one of the settlers.

"Whew! How many?"

"Six, at least."

"How air ye goin' to git the varmints out?"

This was a question no one seemed inclined to answer.

"We mout get at 'em through the roof," was at length suggested.

After some consideration, the plan was adopted. One of the boldest of the lot ascended by the projecting ends of the logs, armed with a sharp ax, to the roof. Arrived here, with a few well-directed blows, he cut a large aperture in the roof.

Those below anxiously awaited the result. Carefully inserting his head in the opening he had made, the man carefully surveyed the interior of the loft. It contained, besides a number of sacks of grain, a few old buffalo-robcs.

But he could see nothing of the savages, and this he intimated to those below. Some laughed at the joke, while others suggested that perhaps the red-skins were concealed behind the sacks.

Suddenly an idea seemed to strike him upon the roof, and in a low voice he requested those below to hand him up a loaded rifle. This was quickly complied with.

Inserting the barrel of the weapon through the aperture in

the roof, he took a steady aim at the buffalo-robbers, and fired. Almost simultaneously with the report came a wild yell, and through the canopy of sulphurous smoke, he saw four or five savages coming toward him. He sprung quickly back, but at the same instant the foremost of the savages reached the opening, through which he passed out upon the roof.

The Indian aimed a blow at the settler with his tomahawk, but the latter escaped by ducking his head, and then grasping the savage round the waist. There was a momentary struggle for the mastery, then the snowy roof caused one of them to slip, and a blow from a clubbed rifle struck the Indian upon the skull, spattering the blood and brains in every direction. He was then flung to one side, a ghastly sight.

The remaining savages—three of them—stood upon the roof, hardly knowing whether to jump down or to conceal themselves in the loft again. They had not long to decide. A bullet from below struck one of their number in the breast, and he fell forward to the ground without a groan. This seemed to sharpen the wits of the remaining two, and with a couple of quick springs, they disappeared in the aperture.

“Waugh!” said one of the trappers below, “the varmints air caged ag’in. This time, it’ll be a leetle harder to drive ’em out, I reckon.”

Considerably hurt by his fall, the settler who had cut the opening in the roof was unable to take further part in the proceedings. But this did not at all deter others from doing so, and another soon volunteered to risk his life in the attempt to drive the savages forth from their place of concealment.

He succeeded in reaching the roof, but the moment he placed himself opposite the opening, an arrow whizzed forth. The man rolled over backward, and was caught in the arms of half a dozen men, the missile sticking through his arm, the blood from which was flowing freely.

The party now changed their tactics. There was another way by which the loft could be reached from the ground floor, by a rude ladder inside.

Entering the barn, two of the trappers sprung hastily up the ladder, with rifles cocked and ready. But not a single savage was to be seen.

For a single moment both men stood still. But as their eyes fell upon the pile of buffalo-skins, they approached and commenced to upturn them, one after another. But before they had time to get through with this, the remaining robes were flung hastily up, and from them sprung the form of one of the Indians. Without stopping an instant, he bounded toward the opening in the roof. He acted with the utmost celerity, but one of the trappers was equally as quick. Bringing his rifle to his shoulder, he fired, and just as the savage was disappearing through the opening. The Ojibwah fell to the ground, where he lay stiff and still.

"He's done for," remarked a youngster.

"Sartin," replied another. "The varmint's as dead as a meat-ax."

Such, indeed, appeared to be the case; and it is probable that the cunning savage would have escaped, had not a curious bystander made the remark that he failed to see any spot where the Indian had been struck with the bullet. This led to an investigation, and the result was, *not the slightest trace of a bullet was to be found.*

"Playing possum, eh?" said one of the trappers, taking a knife coolly from his belt.

Kneeling at the side of the prostrate savage, with a sudden movement, the trapper plunged it up to the hilt in the red-skin's breast. The blood spurted forth, and, opening his eyes, the victim essayed to rise to his feet. But this only tended to increase the flow of blood, and, with a deep groan, he fell back. Life was extinct.

At this moment, the trappers in the loft informed those below that the remaining savage was not to be found. What could have become of him? Three had disappeared in the loft, and two had already been disposed of.

Presently, the two trappers descended, saying they had searched every nook and corner, but in vain. The savage was not in the loft.

Various were the ideas put forth to account for the mystery, but all proved of no avail.

At one end of the barn, directly before a window, there stood a gigantic oak. Directing his attention toward this, one of the trappers glanced upward, among the huge branches

and dead leaves. His scrutiny appeared to satisfy him, and at length, with a sudden movement, he raised his rifle, and fired among a clump of dried leaves and twigs. A cry of pain was heard, which, together with the sound of the shot, attracted the remainder of the trappers to the spot.

Glancing upward, they perceived a savage, holding fast to a limb above him, his feet swinging in the air.

His movements were greeted with a loud laugh, the trappers watching his sufferings with no small delight. The savage attempted to find beneath him a resting-place for his feet, but not a branch was nearer than five feet to him.

“Wagh!” said a voice. “He won’t hang there long.”

The painful situation of the savage was becoming more so every moment. He once or twice essayed to pull himself over the branch, but not being much of a gymnast, and, moreover, the ball he had received in his side paining him, he failed in accomplishing it.

At length, one of his hands relaxed its hold, and the tired member dropped to his side. He struggled heroically, after a few seconds, to again clutch the branch with both hands, but he was too fatigued, and failed. The other hand now quickly released its hold, and he dropped like a plummet to the ground. A blow on the head with a rifle, and his tale was done.

This scene had occupied some little time, and the settlers set to work with renewed activity to clear the barn of its contents, now that the coast was clear.

CHAPTER VII.

LAURA HAUTVILLE’S HISTORY.

THAT night, seated in a small apartment in the fort, lighted by a huge log fire at one end of it, were Henry and Laura Hautville. The arm of the brother was around his beautiful sister’s waist, and he listened with rapt attention to each word that fell from her lips. Young as he was when they were

parted, he had never forgotten her, and as each year of his life went by, he had yearned to see her more and more, though sometimes the thought that she was dead would take possession of him. So, too, it was with her. She was older than he, and the details of that dreadful tragedy upon the river she had never forgotten.

"Laura," said her brother, "you must have had a sad time of it, since last I saw you?"

"Sad? Oh, yes," she replied. "That is no name for what I suffered. It was only the hope of again seeing you that often kept me alive. Yes, sooner than again fall into the hands of these savages—and especially one—I would hurl myself from a high cliff!"

"Fear not, sister. You are safe here."

"Would you like to hear my history, Henry?"

"Nothing would please me better."

"You shall hear it, then."

"When the Indian who bore me from you lifted me into his canoe, I felt as if I could jump into the river, so terrible did his face and look seem. I could not cry, for I was far too terrified for that. When we reached the shore he took me out and hid the canoe in some bushes. Then he seized me in his arms and ran like a frightened deer into the forest.

"On, on he carried me until he came to a stream of water, which he at once entered and then waded down the stream for fully a mile. Then stepping out upon the bank, he carried me to a cave that was not far off. He scraped together some leaves, upon which he laid me. There, in English, he told me to go asleep. Of course this was out of the question, and for the first time, I began to weep. But the Indian pointed to his tomahawk, and I was fain to stop on the instant.

"In half an hour or so from the time we entered the cave, it was with feelings of great relief that I saw the Indian leave me. Soon after, feeling terribly tired, I fell asleep. When I awoke it was night. Just outside the cave was burning a fire, and over it the Indian was cooking meat. When this was done he came and offered me a piece, and feeling very hungry, I did not refuse it. This seemed to please him, and after that he spoke in a far kinder tone to me. He gave me

a drink of water from a leathern canteen, and then he prepared to leave the place. He took me in his arms again and carried me along at a rapid pace.

"The night was a beautiful one. The moon was shining brightly, with not a cloud to dim a single star. To my surprise the Indian proceeded toward the river where we had left it that afternoon. The canoe was in the bushes just as he had left it. He placed me in it, then stepped inside himself and pushed off from the shore. He headed the canoe up the stream, keeping near the shore and paddling rapidly. Feeling tired, I laid down in the bottom of the canoe and fell asleep. I slept for hours, for when I awoke the east was becoming streaked with gray, accompanied with a wind, which chilled me through and through. We had been on the water all night and I knew we were miles away from the spot from which we had started the night before.

"Soon after the rising of the sun the Indian headed the canoe ashore, and I was very glad of being allowed a chance of exercising my limbs again. The Indian collected a pile of dried sticks and leaves and then kindled them into a blaze. At a short distance from this he kindled another fire, and then a third some distance from the second. The spot where we landed had a few trees growing close to the river, but behind these the prairie stretched far as the eye could reach. The fires the savage had kindled were signals, though at that time I did not understand it.

"The Indian kept the fires burning for at least two hours ; then he produced some jerked beef. Giving me part of this, he eat the remainder himself and then lay down on the ground and was soon asleep. How I longed to escape, but I knew that, even if I could succeed in doing so, a far more terrible fate awaited me—that of starvation.

"The Indian slept until it was afternoon. The moment he awoke he rose to his feet and gazed out upon the prairie. I followed his example, and my eyes fell upon a line of dark objects far away. They were Indians, and mounted. They were stringing over the prairie like wolves, and coming directly toward us. It was a splendid sight, Henry—those horses as they galloped over the prairie, with long manes and lithe limbs !

"In a short time they reached us, and with a quick jerk of the bridle they brought their steeds to a stand-still. For a few moments they and my captor conversed together, then I was suddenly seized and placed upon one of the horses, beside a young, and not bad-looking Indian. My captor—whose name you know is Cunning Serpent—took his seat on one of the spare horses the prairie Indians ever carry along with them when upon a journey, and in less than a minute the whole troop was again in motion, heading in the direction whence they had just come. My Indian rode like a Centaur, and despite the situation I was in, that prairie ride was a delightful one. The savages headed north, and they rode at a rapid pace until sundown.

"By this time we had arrived at the extremity of another forest, through which a stream of reddish water was coursing its way. It was the Red River of the North.

"The next morning Cunning Serpent produced another canoe, and after we had embarked he paddled down the stream. For four days did we journey thus, and early on the morning of the fifth day the Indian ran the canoe into a wide creek, up which he proceeded for nearly three miles. Suddenly he ceased to paddle for a moment, and gave forth a loud whoop. Scarcely had it died from his lips when it was answered by a hundred others. The next moment a spot of ground free from trees, and occupied by two hundred lodges, came into view. It was a singular sight, and I am not equal to the task of describing it.

"I instantly became the target of three hundred pairs of eyes. For a long while they surveyed me, as if I had been some great curiosity; then I was placed in the care of a horrible looking old hag, who took me to her lodge.

"Time went by and I grew to be a big girl. The Indian girls were kind to me, and learned me to embroider and make leggins and moccasins. At the same time I learned the pleasant news that I was to be, some day, the wife of a great chief.

"With but one exception, the warriors were kind to me, and gave me the name of the White Lily. That one exception was a young warrior, who, from the first day I saw the village, had evinced a dislike for me. This he took care to

now on every occasion, and I was in constant dread of him. He was by far the best-looking man in the village, and was called Deer-foot.

“ One day, some eight years after my capture, I was in the forest, gathering wild-flowers. Suddenly I heard a light foot step behind me. I turned round, and, to my horror, Deer foot was before me.

“ ‘ White Lily,’ he said, ‘ do not fear me. I am your friend.’ To my surprise, he spoke in English, the first time I had heard that tongue spoken for a long, long time.

“ ‘ Listen to me,’ he continued, ‘ I, like you, am not an Indian. I was captured when ten years of age, and have been living with them ever since. Would you not like to escape ?’

“ He put the question so suddenly that I knew not how to reply.

“ ‘ I shall do so,’ he quickly added, ‘ at the first opportunity, and, if you desire it, I will take you with me. It is for this very reason that I have never appeared friendly toward you, for, had I done so, we would have been closely watched, and that would hinder my plans. But I must not linger here. We may be seen. Remember, White Lily, that I am openly your enemy, but secretly your friend.’

“ With these words, he disappeared silently through the bushes, and I was alone. But wily as Deer-foot was, our interview must have been seen. I was treated as before, with the exception that I was never again allowed to go far from the village, and even then I was under the strict watch of some of the Indian girls.

“ This scene I have just related took place in the spring. Late that fall an Indian runner came into the village with the news that a large body of Sioux were on the war-path, and that their presence at our village was not to be unexpected. Of course, this intelligence was received with the wildest excitement. The head chief immediately held a council, after which nearly all of the warriors immediately returned to their lodges. In less than an hour they issued forth again. The ochre and vermilion had been washed from their faces,

and streaks of black placed in their stead. This was the war-paint.

Their appearance was greeted with unearthly shrieks and yells from the squaws, who loudly commanded them, also, to bring back the scalps of their enemies to appease the wrath within them. The warriors answered not a word, but, one following the footsteps of the other, they strode silently away into the forest, leaving the village guarded by the boys and a few old men. Had Deer-foot been with me, I should have certainly endeavored to escape; but he was not; he was gone with the war-party.

The warriors were absent four days, then they returned. They had ambushed the advancing Sioux and a terrible conflict took place, in which the head-chief and the second were killed. But our party were victorious and they took many scalps. On their return the squaws went forth to meet them, and when some learned they had lost a husband, some a brother or father, loud shrieks rent the air. They demanded the scalps of their slain enemies, and as these were handed them, their cries of grief changed into exclamations of joy and exultation.

“Among those who returned was Deer-foot. He was the only one whose belt did not carry a scalp. Indianized as he was, he had not got down to that. During the conflict with the Sioux, Cunning Serpent, by his bravery, had attracted the notice of the tribe toward himself, and, as their head-chief was no more, he was unanimously proclaimed to be their chief—the position he now occupies.

“Years went by. Last fall the crops of the Indians, suffering for want of rain, died out. The sagacity of Cunning Serpent told him a famine must be the result. Having no corn, of course they were unable to make their winter's store of pemmican, which, for weeks in winter, is an Ojibwah's sole subsistence. Accordingly, to my joy, I was informed secretly by Deer-foot that it was the intention of the tribe to move southward. This was indeed gratifying news. Being near to civilized parts, I expected to easily effect my escape, an expectation, dear brother, which has been more than realized. Yes, in one hour, I have regained both freedom and my brother.”

For some moments after, both were silent. Suddenly, she asked :

“Henry, this trapper who saved your life—are you not friends?”

“No,” he answered, curtly.

“Why?”

“From what I have heard from Captain Treville, he is not my friend.”

“Henry, I have not seen much of this Treville,” she replied, “but of the two, the trapper is the truest man. Remember, it may be the captain who is in fault. Time may prove that I am right; and, in the meantime, keep your own counsel, and do not let the words of another make you act unkindly to the one to whom you owe so much.”

CHAPTER VIII.

A TERRIBLE CONFLICT.

It is night—black and dreary.

The wind is sighing in gusts through the treetops, hurling the falling snow in drifts against any opposing obstacle.

In the settlement, save the soft footstep of the sentry upon the parapet of the block-house, nothing is to be heard.

“Cuss this snow!” the man mutters to himself. “The redskins kin cam upon us afore we know it.”

And the man resumed his walking to and fro upon the parapet, humming to himself some well-known song. But ever and anon he ceases, and then listens intently. Each time, only the deep sighing of the wind reaches his well-trained ear.

Despite his attentiveness, despite his attempt to feel indifferent to his surroundings, he feels uneasy. Is it the cold and the dreariness of the night? No; he is used to both.

Suddenly, he stops short in his march, and calls in a loud tone to the sentry at the stockade gate:

“Jim, keep your eyes peeled.”

"All right, hoss," is the response. "I only wish it warn't quite so dark."

"It suits the red-skins, though. They kin see like a bat."

"Right, boy, right. It's as much the natur' o' one as the other."

He upon the parapet resumed his walk. His mind still felt uneasy, and he endeavored to relieve himself by chanting low a favorite trapper hunting-song. But it was in vain. Again he came to a halt, and called out to him at the gate:

"Jim. The red-skins 'll find their match, ef they come, eh?"

There was no answer. Only a violent gust of wind broke the horrible stillness. The trapper called out his companion's name in a louder tone. No answer.

"There's something wrong!" he muttered.

He turned round; and the same moment the sinewy hand of a savage clutched him by the throat. The trapper struggled to release himself, but a keen blade entered his breast, and he sunk without a groan to the parapet. With a grunt of triumph the savage grasped the unfortunate trapper by the hair, passed his keen knife round his victim's scalp, and tore it from its socket. He stuck the reeking trophy at his girdle, and then hurriedly descended the steps to the snowy ground. Instantly he made his way to the gate, and there rapped three times upon the post with his tomahawk.

The signal was instantly answered. Scores of dusky forms suddenly debouched from the woods, running like deer across the opening, and crowding inside the stockade.

With that noiseless glide which characterizes the savage, they approached the fort. Then, for the first time, their wild "Ho-yo-chee" burst forth, and in a body the fort's inside was gained.

Taken, as those inside were, by surprise, for a moment they seemed incapable of action. The yells of the savages—the shrieks of the women and children, were appalling to listen to!

"Where are my scouts?" asked Treville! "Why were we not apprised of this?"

The question was put to the trappers, but was answered by the savage chief.

"The Cunning Serpent has seen to that," he said. "Pale-faces may be cunning, but the Ojibwahs can match them."

The work of destruction began. Tomahawks, knives, hatchets were drawn, and rifles belched forth their contents. Foemen grappled with each other, coming to an embrace which ended only in death. Knives—reeking with warm blood—were held on high, and suddenly found another victim.

With their clubbed rifles, the trappers fought, nearly stifled with the sulphurous smoke that filled the room.

But the dreadful tomahawk did its work, and in less than twenty minutes from the commencement of the conflict, the savages were masters of the room.

At the door of an apartment where had been placed the females and children, stood a group of villagers. Upon these the savages next rushed, and with such fury that they were masters of the situation at once. They then essayed to open the door, but found it was barricaded. With savage yells they brought their tomahawks to bear upon it, splitting the hard wood with their keen weapons. But in doing this they were by no means left unmolested. They were standing in a long passageway, from one end of which a continuous fire poured upon them. The savages now suffered terribly, and a score detached themselves from the left, in order to drive their assailants from their position. But they were met by such a galling fire that they were forced to retreat. To add to the horror of the situation, the fort had taken fire. The whites knew that a large quantity of gunpowder was stored away in one of the rooms, above, and an immediate retreat was begun, leaving the savages to their task of battering down the door.

When they found themselves outside, another scene presented itself. The barns and cabins had been fired, and the heat was melting the snow all over the clearing. Many of the combatants had found themselves outside, and, aided by the light of the conflagration, the combat still raged, fierce and deadly.

Knowing better than to trust themselves in the immediate vicinity of the burning fort, the trappers and traders sheltered themselves behind a rampart of logs, which had been cut for the erection of a cabin in the spring. The moment a savage showed himself in the clearing, a rifle would crack, and he would drop to the earth.

Among the trappers who had sheltered themselves here was Moccasin Bill. He had fought desperately, and was literally drenched with blood.

"Wagh!" said a voice, "the red-skins won't stay in the fort long after the fire reaches the powder. What troubles me is the weemen an' young ones."

"No fear of them," replied Moccasin Bill. "Before this time Treville has got them safe in the passage underneath. The explosion can't reach them there."

There was now a lull in the conflict. Those of the foe who still lived were inside the fort, and not a single savage was to be seen in the clearing. Leaning on their loaded rifles, the band watched the conflagration eagerly. That for which they were waiting would soon come.

By this time the fire had reached the parapet, and was still progressing onward. It was just at this time that the savages succeeded in battering down the door. They rushed inside the room, and, to their chagrin, the room was deserted. A wild yell announced this discovery, which reached those outside.

"There!" exclaimed Moccasin Bill. "They have given the devils the slip."

But the fire had reached the powder, and the time had come. A gleam of light shot upward like a meteor, and at the same instant the burning logs scattered in every direction. Human beings were hurled high into the air, and the force of the explosion shook the fort to its very foundations.

But few of the savages escaped. Some were knocked senseless to the earth with burning posts and logs, while others found themselves surrounded by a sheet of hissing flame, to extricate themselves from which, all their endeavors were unavailing.

Those who did escape, scorched by the fire, suddenly found themselves confronted by their enemies, who, the moment the explosion occurred, ran forward to intercept their escape. The savages numbered about a score, their opponents double that amount. Thus the tables, by a fortunate circumstance, had been turned.

The Ojibwahs fought desperately, but the loaded rifles of

their enemies were brought to bear upon them, and they were forced to give way.

Among the savages was the Cunning Serpent. The Ojibwah chief had escaped without a scratch. He saw his men give way, and raising his voice, hoarse with passion, he commanded them to stand their ground. But all he could say availed nothing, and at last they turned and ran, leaving their chief in the midst of his enemies.

"Dogs!" he ejaculated, aiming a blow at his nearest foe.

In his hurry, he missed his aim. Then, before the man could recover from his surprise, the chief stuck his tomahawk in his girdle, and jumped, with a single bound, over the man's shoulders. Half a dozen blows with clubbed rifles were aimed at him, but he escaped them all; and with a taunting laugh, he made for the cover of the woods. Pistols flashed after him, but it seemed as if the savage bore a charmed life, and he escaped.

He reached the edge of the woods. He saw he was unpursued, and here he paused. But it was only long enough for him to give forth the war-whoop, when he turned and disappeared.

Thus ended one of the most fearful conflicts that the territory of Minnesota ever saw. But for that fortunate explosion, the savages must have gained the day. But for that the savages would have found those secreted in the subterranean passage, and not one would have escaped. The Indian war is a war of extermination. The infant becomes a prey to his tomahawk no less than those whose heads are white from age.

CHAPTER IX.

A DESPERATE JOURNEY.

THE snow was still falling, and the violence of the wind had not yet abated.

The settlement presented a fearful aspect. The conflagration had greatly subsided, and most of the cabins now presented a heap of smoking ruins. It was indeed a sorry sight to the now houseless settlers, and many a bitter curse was that night pronounced upon their enemies. What were they to do? It was winter, and with the destruction of the fort had come the destruction of all their summer's work. Their grain had been stored in the foot cellar for safety, and, alas! all was now lost. Starvation and death stared them in the face.

The villagers stood in small groups here and there, alarm and despair depicted upon the countenance of each.

"Where is 'Treville?'" said one, at length. "Perhaps he can suggest some plan."

"In the passage, with the women and children," answered another.

"Well, you know where the forest end of the passage is?"

"Yes."

"Then go and fetch the captain. We must call a council."

The other set off at once. Entering the forest he walked forward until he came to a spot where the snow was higher than the surrounding ground. Brushing the snow away with his arm, a stone was disclosed to view, which the man at once proceeded to shift from its place. By dint of severe exertions he succeeded, and an aperture just large enough to admit the body of a man was disclosed.

Entering, the man found himself in a narrow passageway, but which he followed with the ease of one accustomed to the place. Suddenly he found himself in the spot where the passage widened out until it assumed the dimensions of a huge room.

"Who goes there?" demanded a voice, which the man knew to be that of Treville.

"I, captain—Wilkins. You are wanted."

"Is the battle over?"

"Yes ; the reds are done for."

"Indeed ! I fully expected they would show themselves here every moment. But, at first, you had no chance with them. How came you to stem the tide ?"

"The fort blew up, killing at least a hundred. Didn't you hear the noise ?"

Treville replied in the negative. They were many rods from where the fort stood, and the earth had deadened the sound.

Wilkins, followed by Treville, Hautville and one or two others who had, on the commencement of the late conflict, hurried the women and children into the passage, again made his way outside.

They wended their way toward the clearing, and there were met by a crowd of the settlers.

"Cap'n," said one, "circumstances look desperate. What are we to do ?"

"The question is easier asked than answered," replied Treville, after a few moments' consideration.

"For my part, I think we must stay where we are," was quickly added by another.

"What, and raise another fort ?"

"Yes ; we've logs in plenty."

"Yes," now put in Treville, that will be our wisest course.

"We can build another fort, though it will be a great undertaking at this season.

During this dialogue, the crowd had been swelled by the addition of several trappers, among them Moccasin Bill.

"If you are all done," he said, at the conclusion of Treville's reply, "I will say a few words."

Known to be a man of sound judgment, he was listened to with marked attention.

"You propose, I think, to remain here, and build a fort. Do as you wish in the matter, but as for me, I consider it an unwise and dangerous conclusion. Why ? I will tell you my reasons, my comrades. In the first place, all the tools in

the fort have been destroyed by the fire. A few of us have hatchets, but those are insufficient to notch the logs."

"True," said a few voices; "we had forgotten that."

"Again, we have no spades to dig up the earth to build a fireplace, and stop up the crevices between the logs, to keep out the cold. Next, it is more than probable that we shall be again attacked. There are plenty of tribes about here, and a very few words will suffice for this chief to stir them into action."

"What is to be done, then?"

"Start at once for the nearest settlement," replied the trapper. "St. James is not more than twenty-five miles down the river. The undertaking has its drawbacks, I admit, but by no means so many as the other one."

To most of the villagers this plan proved favorable. There were a few others who opposed it however, among them being Captain Treville and young Hautville. The former saw that that proposed by the trapper was by far the wisest course, and had it been proposed by any one else, he would not have lifted up his voice against it.

"It'll be a mighty journey through this snow," said one of the opposing party.

"Very true," said one of the other side. "But what are we to do? As Moccasin Bill says, we are as likely to be attacked as not; and if we are, we'll all go under, sure as fate."

"Right, hoss," said the voice of a trapper. "We've got the young girl as we took from the varmints this mornin'. It's as clear as daylight that the chief dotes on her, and it ain't likely as he'll leave 'thout tryin' hard to git her back."

This changed the opinions of several of the hitherto opposing ones, among them Hautville.

"After all," the latter remarked to Treville, in a whisper, "the trapper is right. You remember, the savage refused to give up my sister for any price."

Treville felt annoyed, but he said nothing.

But it took little more to make the few yield to the wishes of the many.

It was decided to push forward to the settlement of St. James, and at once. The leadership was assigned to Mocca-

sin Bill, and his orders were executed with the utmost dispatch. The women and children were brought from their place of concealment, and in less than an hour all was in readiness for the start.

It had been arranged that several of the trappers, acting as scouts, were to precede the party by a short distance, and as many more were to bring up the rear. Moccasin Bill was to be among the forward number.

The party was in motion.

On the start, they followed the course of the river, as the snow on the ice was not so deep as in the woods. But this plan was soon abandoned. The glassy-like surface of the river was difficult to progress on, and the keen wind which swept across it pierced the sufferers to the bone. Accordingly, they entered the forest, where the trees served to break the force of the blast, and, though progression was nearly as difficult as on the ice, all felt bettered by the change.

On, on they struggled, the fear of being pursued by the dreaded foe giving them strength which, had it been otherwise, they would not have possessed.

Toward morning, the wind and snow ceased, and the clouds that had obscured the sky dispersed. The party now came to a halt, the spot being in the midst of a dense wood. Huge armfuls of dry wood were collected, and as it was kindled into a blaze, the party crowded round it to enjoy its cheering warmth. They were now fully ten miles from the spot whence they started, and, if all went well, they would arrive at their destination on the evening of the following day.

CHAPTER X.

THE ADVENTURES OF A MORNING.

MORNING came, with not a cloud to dim the splendor of the sun.

Scarcely had the grand orb appeared above the horizon, when Moccasin Bill, accompanied by one or two other trap-

pers, left the party, with the intention of seeking something which would serve for their morning's meal. Game was plenty in the immediate neighborhood, and no great distance would they have to go before they met with some.

The trio continued in the woods for some time, then they suddenly obliques sharply to the right. This course would lead them directly to the river.

The stream was reached. Scarcely was this done, when the tracks of a deer met their eyes, denoting that the animal had crossed the ice, and but a short time before. Moccasin Bill bent low, and closely scrutinized the imprints left in the snow.

"It's a buck," he said, shortly; "and he crossed over not more than half an hour ago."

This was agreeable news, and the trio commenced the pursuit at once. Crossing the river, they climbed up the steep, snowy bank, which was in the immediate vicinity of a steep and rugged cliff.

The tracks skirted round the base of this bluff, until they led to a spot of clear, marshy ground. Concealed by a thicket of young hickories, the three men gazed forth toward the marsh. The object of their search was before them. He was a noble buck, with high, branching antlers. He was turning up the snow with his nose, and grazing on the dry grass that lay beneath it.

"Too far from here," said one of the men.

"Yes," responded Moccasin Bill. "We might succeed in wounding, but we could not drop him at such a distance. We may stalk him. How's the wind, I wonder?"

As he said this, he took from a small leathern bag a feather, light enough to be stirred by the faintest breeze. He placed this at the muzzle of his rifle. The light breeze carried it toward the direction whence they had come.

"All right. We're to his leeward. He won't scent us."

He to whom was assigned the duty of stalking the buck was the smallest of the three, and a man used to that species of work.

Dropping upon his knees, the trapper commenced to crawl forward. Ever and anon the buck would stop grazing, and look about him. Each time the stalker would lie prostrate

on the earth, and the animal failed to perceive him. He progressed as rapidly as the nature of his undertaking would admit, but the distance between him and his mark was great.

Suddenly the buck was seen to raise his antlers with a quick jerk. Tossing aloft his head, he sniffed the air, and at the same time he pawed the snow with one of his front feet.

"Ha ! There's something in the wind," exclaimed Moccasin Bill, as he witnessed this action of the animal.

"It ain't Jim as he scents," said his companion.

"No no. See, he tosses his head to the windward. It's either red-skins or wolves."

Each passing moment the animal seemed to grow more uneasy. At last he gives vent to a half-frightened, half-angry snort, and away he dashes, like an arrow from a bow. The course he takes lays toward the bluff, not far distant.

"Try him !" yells out Moccasin Bill, as he dashes on, hardly heeding the stalker, who has suddenly risen to his feet. "Try him with a flying shot !"

Obedient to the words, the stalker brings his rifle to his shoulder. For a single instant only does his eye glance along the barrel, then he presses the trigger. Simultaneously with the report the buck plunges forward, coming to the snow on his knees. The shot had taken effect in the animal's left flank, whence a small stream of blood was flowing. The wound was less dangerous than painful, and in an instant the buck was again on his feet, heading for the bluff.

Without stopping to recharge his rifle, the stalker dashed after his two companions, who were running toward the bluff at the top of their speed. By the time he reached the base of the hill, his companions were half-way up it, and lost to view among the rocks and bushes which covered the acclivity.

Just at this moment a sound reached his ears which caused him to look back. A sight met his gaze which caused him to turn his thoughts from the chase, and halt on the instant. Debouching from the woods was a pack of wolves—the cause of the buck's sudden flight. There were dozens of the animals, with glaring eyes and set teeth. The gray wolf is at all times a terrible animal, and especially so in winter, when,

driven frantic with hunger, he attacks man with no less impunity than he does his natural prey.

The trapper hid himself behind a high and steep rock, hoping the pack would pass him by unnoticed.

The animals reached the spot where the buck had been wounded, and, with the first scent of blood, their savageness seemed to increase. In an instant they turned toward the bluff, deploying as they ran. To the trapper's chagrin, several of them separated so far from the rest that he perceived they would not pass by without discovering him. Knowing well that an attempt to combat with the creatures would be but an act of madness, he immediately set about discovering some safe place of refuge. The rock he was standing near seemed to offer him that for which he sought, and he at once commenced to scramble up its side. He succeeded in ascending for a short distance, when the snow caused him to slip; and before he had the time to clutch the rock and save himself, he was on the ground. To his horror, the wolves—a dozen or more—were close at hand.

The trapper gave vent to a yell, which was intended to frighten the wild creatures, and at the same instant he recommenced the ascent of the rock. But before he had time to get beyond their reach, one of the animals had run up, and seized with its teeth the skirt of his hunting shirt. Clinging fast to the rock, the trapper drew his hatchet from his belt, and gave the wolf a terrible gash in its face, which soon caused it to release its hold. A moment or two later, the trapper was chuckling over his escape on the summit of the rock.

The rock was now surrounded by the angry pack, who eyed the figure at the top with hungry looks.

"So ye want this 'coon, eh?" chuckled the trapper, as he was quietly loading his rifle. "Well, ye shall soon hev something to satisfy yer stomachs. He! he!"

The rifle was loaded, and one of the wolves was quickly dispatched. In an instant the victim's companions were upon it, tearing it limb from limb, and eagerly devouring the yet quivering mass. Again and again did the trapper's rifle crack, until the surrounding wolves began to diminish rapidly in numbers. At last, but two remained. The trapper's rifle

was charged, but, not liking to waste an unnecessary shot, he slid down the surface of the rock to the ground. Hatchet in hand, he dashed toward the two remaining wolves. One of them was soon dispatched, being game to the last; while the other, with a deep howl, made for the cover of the forest.

Shouldering his rifle, the trapper started after his two companions. Here we will leave him, and relate what befell Moccasin Bill and his comrade. Springing up the cliff, they had not advanced fifty rods before the buck was lost among the crags.

Soon the tracks led through a wide fissure between two rocks. Once through this opening, the two men found themselves standing upon the extreme edge of a precipice, which overhung the river far beneath. But a ledge wide enough for the buck to pass along, a fact which the animal had availed himself of. Following along this ledge, the two arrived at a spot where the ledge came to an abrupt end. Below them some dozen feet was a sort of gully, and the animal had leaped into this at a bound. Moccasin Bill at once imitated the buck's example, as did also his companion.

From this gully led two paths—one leading to the summit of the cliff, the other to the river below. The tracks of the buck showed he had chosen the former one.

Moccasin Bill bent his gaze upward, and the object of their search at once met his eyes. The animal was standing at the summit of the cliff, his head high up, as if he were snuffing the air.

Suddenly, he was seen to start. He turned his back to the river, and seemed as if to start down the bluff. But in an instant he again turned around, and, with a desperate leap, jumped from the cliff. Down, down he fell, reaching the ice with a dull thud. Life was extinct, nothing remaining but a quivering mass.

The cause of this act was the wolves, who, disappointed in their expectations, were filling the air with their dismal howls. But scarcely heeding these, Moccasin Bill and his companion at once commenced to descend to the river, in order to appropriate to themselves the dead buck, before the arrival of the wolves.

But before they had time to reach the ice, to their surprise,

four savages presented themselves near the dead animal, with a significant suddenness. It was evident to the trappers that the savages were unaware of their close proximity, and were about to appropriate the animal to themselves. But they had had too hard a chase for that, and, moreover, feeling the pangs of hunger keenly, they did not propose to yield up the animal so easily. They continued their descent. This was no difficult matter, as the path was an easy one.

Two of the savages bore on their shoulders a pole, some ten feet in length, three inches or so thick, and made perfectly smooth by having the bark peeled off. Stooping down, one of the savages inserted his knife between the sinews and the bone of each hind leg, immediately below the knee-joint. The pole was inserted through these incisions, and the four savages, two on each side, raised the pole to their shoulders.

At this juncture, the two trappers reached the ice, and came to a halt. Then, without giving their enemies a warning cry, they raised their rifles, and fired. Two of the savages dropped instantly, the two remaining ones dropping the pole at the same time. The two latter lingered there but an instant, then, with a wild yell of alarm, they sprung toward the shore, a few rods above where the two trappers were standing.

"They mustn't escape us," was the warning cry of Moccasin Bill. "If they do, they will bring down a host of the red-devils upon us in a squirrel's jump."

The Ojibwahs reached the bluff, and, with a quickness terror is wont to give, they commenced to scramble up the base. Moccasin Bill had never in his life loaded his rifle with more celerity than he did then, and immediately after driving home the bullet he ran toward the part of the bluff which had been ascended by the savages, placing the cap upon the nipple as he ran. When he arrived in sight of the pursued, they were some hundred paces up the cliff. One of them stood on the top of a huge rock, which the other was attempting to scale. The latter attempted it twice, but each time he, unfortunately for himself, slipped back. He was a splendid mark, and the trapper at once took advantage of it. Elevating his rifle, he fired. The unerring bullet took effect, but was not instantly fatal. The savage fell back, but before he could

roll down the cliff, he clatched a bush near him, and held on. But his strength lasted only a moment or two, and then he came rolling downward—dead. The other savage, knowing he was likely to receive a bullet in his back if he continued his flight, had thrown himself flat upon the rock.

While Moccasin Bill was reloading his rifle, his companion cocked his, and sprung up the cliff. He reached the rock on which the savage was lying, but its height prevented him from at once accomplishing his purpose. Suddenly the idea struck him to ascend the cliff a short distance, and fire down upon the Indian. He was, therefore, about to leave the rock, when he chanced to glance upward. The savage was standing on the extreme edge of the rock, eying him closely. The trapper made a movement to raise his rifle, but before he could do so, the savage sprang down, landing with all his weight upon the trapper's shoulders. The concussion sent the man rolling half-way down the bluff before he could arrest himself. He was exasperated by this circumstance, by his rifle being discharged during his tumble, but still more so by the wild peals of laughter from Moccasin Bill at the bottom of the bluff, and who, leaning on his rifle, had been quietly awaiting what should happen. The trapper rose to his feet. The savage who had played him the trick was far up the cliff, climbing for dear life. The man sent a round of imprecations after him, then turning to our hero, he asked him whether he meant to bring down a crowd of red-skins with his yells. Moccasin Bill instantly resumed his gravity, but not until they reached the camp did his companion recover his temper.

In the meantime, the savage reached the summit. He had succeeded in escaping the hand of man, but a far worse fate than the leaden bullet was his. Barely had he reached the top of the bluff, when a score of the wolves sprung upon him, tearing the unfortunate savage limb from limb.

The two trappers turned from the fearful scene toward the dead buck. Standing near it was the figure of the stalker, who had just made his appearance on the scene, after his encounter with the wolves.

After explaining the reason of his late arrival on the scene, the buck was hoisted upon the shoulders of the trappers, and they at once returned to the hungry camp.

CHAPTER XI.

AN EVENTFUL NIGHT.

THAT day proved to be one of those balmy winter days which, in the latitude of which I write, so often succeeds a cold snap—days as mild as those of spring itself.

Indeed, it proved a God-send to the settlers, who, after a terrible walk of fifteen miles, found themselves that night in St. James.

The settlers received them with a hearty welcome, and, ere long the homeless ones were feeling comfortable, under the circumstances. Fearing an attack from the savages, the settlers of St. James had made the utmost of preparations for its defense. In fact, with its model block-house, it could have repulsed double or treble the amount of Indians which attacked Blue Creek. Two cannons, which, from old age, would have been considered as useless on a field of battle, had been purchased by the pioneers, and they were mounted on the parapet, ready, on an instant's warning, to commence action.

That night, the twilight had scarcely deepened into darkness, when a young Indian—to all appearances—suddenly debouched from the forest, and with hasty footsteps approached the block-house. When near the stockade, he was accosted by one of the villagers, who was performing the duties of a sentry :

“Who are you?”

“I am called by the red-skins, Deerfoot.”

“You look like an Indian,” replied the sentry, “but your voice is that of a white. Which are you?”

“I am a white—by both birth and nature. But I wish to ask you a question. Among the settlers who arrived here this evening, did you notice a female who was dressed like an Ojibwah squaw, and in fawn-skin?”

“I did. I noticed, in particular, her beauty.”

“Yes, yes. Well, I wish to speak to her.

“ Will it be agreeable to her ? ”

Deerfoot smiled. He answered :

“ I can answer for that. Besides, I bring with me news of importance.”

The sentry scanned the speaker closely for a few moments ; then, calling to some one who was near to take his place for a few moments, he walked toward the fort in search of Laura Hautville.

Before long, the man returned, accompanied, not by White Lily, but by her brother—Henry Hautville. The two advanced toward the stockade gate with hasty steps.

“ Where is the Indian ? ” demanded Hautville.

“ Here sir,” said the sentry, pointing at Deerfoot.

“ You inquired for my sister, I believe ? ” said the young man, turning toward Deerfoot.

“ I asked to see the White Lily—or Laura Hautville, whichever name you please to call her by,” was the answer.

“ Well, why do you wish to see her ? ”

There was no response.

“ You do not answer.”

“ You are not the person I sent for,” replied Deerfoot, firmly, yet in a respectful tone.

“ Very well. Perhaps you have no objections against stepping into the fort ? ”

“ None whatever, sir, I assure you.”

The two proceeded together toward the fort. Entering, Deerfoot was led into a room lighted by a huge fire, and a candle, upon a rude wooden table. On entering, Henry fastened the door, a circumstance which did not escape the notice of Deerfoot, although he said nothing.

“ Who are you ? ” demanded Hautville.

“ Why ? ”

“ Why ? Red-skin, answer my question ! ”

“ Red-skin, you call me ! ” answered Deerfoot, slightly losing his temper. “ Sir, I am as white as you are.”

Saying this, he pulled up the sleeve of his hunting-shirt, and bared an arm white and beautiful in its proportions. This surprised Hautville, and he said, in a changed tone :

“ You are, as you said, white. Still, why may not you be some agent of that savage, Cunning Serpent ? ”

"Your sister—if such the White Lily be—can answer that question."

For a few moments after hearing this, Henry Hautville was silent. He then said:

"I will bring my sister. Wait."

He unbolted the door, and left the room, soon to return with his sister. As she entered, and her eyes fell upon Deerfoot, a deep blush overspread her face, and she advanced and held forth her hand. Turning to her brother, she said:

"Henry, here is Deerfoot—he whom I spoke of when I gave you my history."

Forgetting his late dislike toward Deerfoot, Henry walked forward, grasped him by the hand and said:

"Let us be friends."

A few moments later, he quitted the room. The night was a warm one for winter, and the lovers—for such they were—not wishing to be overheard by listeners, quitted the fort. They passed through the gate and forward to the edge of the clearing. Here they lingered for upward of an hour, and then Deerfoot prepared to leave her.

"Forget not what I have said, Laura. Cunning Serpent is a fiend, and he will use every art his subtle imagination possesses to obtain possession of you again. Good-by, for the present."

He wound his arms around her, and then walked away. He did not immediately enter the forest, but crossing the clearing, walked along the river's bank up the stream.

She watched him with a beating heart until he had disappeared, then, heaving a sigh, she prepared to leave the spot. But before she could do so, a noise from behind startled her, and at the same instant a hand clutched her arm. She turned, suspecting for a moment that it might be her brother. But no. The moon's light was streaming down through the trees, and standing before her was the form of Cunning Serpent. His grim visage said that he had heard all they had spoken. She tried to put on a show of fearlessness, but failed, trembling in every limb.

"Come," said the savage, still retaining possession of her arm; "I did not think that the White Lily would so easily be caught."

"Villain !" returned she, addressing him in his own tongue, "release my arm."

"The White Lily is once more mine," he continued, without noticing her words. "She loves Deerfoot, but, ugh ! he shall fall ere another moon has come. I heard all."

"Red devil !" she exclaimed, making a desperate but futile effort to release herself. "You threaten Deerfoot. You are mad ! He is brave, where you fear a wolf ; strong, while you are like a woman ; noble, while you are like that after which you are called."

The contempt with which this was said was not without its effect upon the savage, but he said nothing. A deep scowl sat rigidly on his face, and after a moment's hesitation, with a celerity of movement known only to a savage, he seized her in his arms. A scream of terror escaped her, but before its echoes had died away, she was being borne swiftly into the cover of the deep forest. On, on the terrible savage ran—two things serving to keep him on the move. One was, the prize he had coveted and was now in possession of—the other, the certainty of being pursued.

In something less than two hours, the savage, for the first time, came to a halt. He had arrived at an Indian village, not large, but sufficiently so to protect him from any open attack of all the whites in the immediate neighborhood. He placed his captive in one of the lodges, occupied by only an old hag, whom he advised to keep a sharp look-out, that his captive did not escape. Then, in a single movement, he turned to leave the lodge, and at the same time confronted the young girl.

"Let the White Lily not try to escape," he said. "Cunning Serpent will now find her lover—the nimble Deerfoot. She shall soon behold him. Ha ! ha ! Soon."

Laura sprang forward—sprang forward, as if to implore the savage to listen to her a moment. But he must have known her intention, for he executed a quick movement which placed him outside the lodge, where she was not likely to follow him. Yes, he was gone.

She threw herself down upon the earth and moaned bitterly. Not for herself—not for her own dreadful position—not with the thought that she was in the power of the fiend

whose prisoner she was ; but with the dreadful knowledge that the demon was upon her lover's track, and, unaware of the enemy he had made, would not fail to be struck.

"Oh, Deerfoot!" she moaned, in the language of her childhood ; "would to Heaven you knew as much as I do. Then you might escape. But cunning is more than a match for bravery, and you must fall."

The old hag heard these words, but not knowing their import, said nothing, only watched the young captive with a jealous eye.

Let us follow the chief.

Immediately after quitting the lodge, he walked toward a spot where were assembled a number of savages. Stopping still when he had arrived near them, he said :

"Warriors! Cunning Serpent sees your weapons. They are sharp. He sees your paint. It is red. We know why this is. To-night we were to attack the pale-faces ; but this must not be. Your actions ask the reason. Braves, we have been betrayed."

A howl of anger met this declaration ; and a score of voices demanded the betrayer's name.

"You know him," continued Cunning Serpent. "It is he who did not join my warriors, a few days back, when we took so many scalps, and who complained, like a woman, of having a spirit within him that made him sick. It was a lie! He did not want to fight the pale-faces. More than that—to-night I saw him go to the fort of our enemies. Why? To warn them that we were upon their track. He is a traitor. What shall be his doom?"

As if with one accord, a score of voices proclaimed :

"The stake! The stake!"

"You know his name," added the chief. "Deerfoot!"

Warriors rushed madly over the village, hunting for the man the words of Cunning Serpent had raised their anger against. But he was not to be found. He was not in the village. But he would return, they thought ; and with angered mien, they awaited his coming.

CHAPTER XII.

A NOBLE DEED.

AFTER quitting the room, leaving his sister and Deerfoot together, Harry Hautville, in no very easy frame of mind, sought the presence of Captain Treville. The captain met him with his usual friendliness, and the two immediately fell into conversation.

"Captain," said Hautville, "there has, for some time, been on my mind certain words which I meant to express to you at the first fair opportunity. The time is now."

He spoke seriously, and the captain said, not without evincing some slight uneasiness:

"What may it be, Henry?"

"Regarding the words you have several times mentioned, in which you warned me that Moccasin Bill, rather than being my friend, is my enemy. I have never before asked you your reason, but I do so now. Why do you think so?"

"Excuse me, Henry, but I do not care to answer the question."

"Is it not a fair one?"

"Yes—at least I suppose so," was the evasive reply.

"Then you refuse to inform me?"

"At present—I do refuse."

The young man rose from the chair in which he had been seated, and said:

"Then, Captain Treville, I will say this: Moccasin Bill, far from showing himself what your words have at various times represented him, has ever shown himself to be my *friend*. Therefore, until I have positive proofs that he is not such, I must hold what you have said to be untrue."

There was no reply, and the young man turned and left the room. He at once returned to the room where he had left his sister and Deerfoot. To his surprise, neither of the two were there. With no small degree of anxiety he paced the room for some time. Then, with a sudden impulse he left

the fort, proceeding at once to the sentry at the stockade gate.

"Are you looking for your sister?" was the inquiry that met him.

"Yes."

"She passed outside some little time since, with him you took into the fort."

This was startling news to the young man, and he inquired the direction the two had taken; and the man was about to point it out, when a scream from the opposite side of the clearing startled them both. Henry knew the voice. It was that of his sister. He rushed madly toward the spot whence the sound came. There was no one there, but a noise reached his ears which told him some one had fled hastily from the spot. He did not rush after, but ran hastily back to the fort. He was met by a dozen trappers, who had heard the scream, and had ran outside to learn the cause. In as few words as possible, he informed them of his fears and suspicions.

"The fiend"—he referred to Deerfoot—"came here in the guise of a friend, and my sister was fool enough to trust him. He has borne her away—where, I know not. Oh, God! oh, God!"

"Wagh!" exclaimed one of the trappers. "The varmint can't be far, by this time. Let's arter him at once't, sez I."

He spoke meaningly, and his words were followed. The party passed outside the stockade, and rapidly proceeded toward the spot where Laura and Deerfoot had stood. Bending low, Moccasin Bill, who was one of the number, examined well the track. He at once informed his companions that the tracks were those of a woman and a savage. And rising to his feet, he led the party at a rapid pace along the trail. This was not a very difficult job. The moon was nearly at her full, and threw down her light through the leafless trees in a perfect flood.

They must have been some three miles from the fort, when they entered a sort of ravine. At the time of the snow-storm, the wind had been rushing at hurricane speed through this ravine, and it was as bare as in September of snow. Here, then, the trail the trappers had been following suddenly became lost. Nothing daunted, however, they rushed to the

other debouchure of the ravine. But even here, the broken trail was not to be recovered. This was unpleasant, especially to Henry Hautville, who was on thorns about the safety of his sister.

At the suggestion of Moccasin Bill, a short consultation took place. Without wearying the reader with relating what was said and suggested, we will state the result, which was simply this: A very few miles from the ravine, Moccasin Bill stated there was an Indian village. From all appearances, it was evident that Deerfoot had borne his captive thither. The Indian village was large enough to repel an open attack, and if it was found that the captive girl was in it, she must be recovered by stratagem. The enterprise would require skill and adroitness, no less than pluck and energy for its successful termination. The enemy could not be taken, it is fair to suppose, by surprise. The savages well knew that their captive would be followed, and accordingly take active measures for the prevention of her recovery. Spies outside the limits of the village would have to be baffled, no less than spies within the village. The single warning whoop of a savage, and the game would be lost. All this the men understood, and, under the guidance of our hero, they moved on. They passed over two miles more, when a sudden movement of their leader caused them, like him, to halt on the instant. The cause soon became apparent. A noise a short distance ahead of them—of some one tramping carelessly through the bushes—was a sufficient explanation. Without a word to his companions, Moccasin Bill dropped to his knees, and glided as softly as a snake forward. The person, whoever it was, was moving somewhat hastily, and it put the powers of the trapper to a severe test in his attempt to gain upon the supposed enemy. In his haste, he placed his knee upon a small stick lying upon the surface of the snow, and which broke beneath his weight. The noise, slight as it was, was sufficient for the ears of the pursued. He halted on the second, and called out something in the Ojibwah tongue. As there was no answer he said in English:

“Who goes there?”

He was answered by seeing the form of the trapper rise suddenly from the ground, not a dozen yards away. The per-

son may have been surprised at this sudden apparition, but he was too well trained to evince it. He stood perfectly at rest, awaiting what should happen. It was Deerfoot.

"Come here," said Moccasin Bill.

Without the slightest hesitation, Deerfoot did so.

"Who are you?" was the trapper's next question.

"I am called Deerfoot," was the quiet answer.

"Ha!" exclaimed the trapper, surprised to so suddenly find the one they had been following—the supposed abductor of Laura Hautville. "Then you are my prisoner."

Moccasin Bill had expected to see a show of resistance, as he said these words, but, to his surprise, there was none. Deerfoot simply inquired the reason, in a calm, respectful tone; but there was none given. At his heart, Moccasin Bill felt that, by some way, the one before him was the victim of a mistake. His was not the mien of a guilty man. So the trapper said:

"I am not your accuser. Come."

He led the way to where was standing the rest of his companions.

"Behold your man," he said.

But before he had spoken, Henry Hautville had recognized the prisoner. His passion was stirred in a moment, and he exclaimed:

"Red devil! where is my sister?"

It was now for the first time that Deerfoot started—not at the words themselves—not at the manner in which they were uttered, but at their import.

"Your sister—what of her? I know nothing. I left her at the village, safe."

"A lie!" was Henry's answer. "A lie, I say! Did not you and her leave the fort together?"

"We did," was the answer, eagerly given.

"Well, soon after that, we heard her scream. We went toward the spot whence it had come, and neither of you were to be seen. Villain! you carried her off. Where is she?"

"What!" was Deerfoot's exclamation. "Have you lost her? Oh, God!"

Notwithstanding the agony in which this was said, and which still further served to confirm Moccasin Bill in his

opinion that the one before him was not guilty, it only served to irritate still more the impulsive young man, and to deaden his judgment. And in this he was sided with by his companions. Like him, they thought Deerfoot a cunning knave, and but for the restraining influence of their leader, they would have fallen upon him, and at once.

"Never mind, comrades," at length spoke Hautville. "We know where he has placed her. Let us end him, and at once."

"Right !" was the answer of half a dozen voices. "Drop the red-skin—drop him at once."

This met the approval of the young man, and he even went so far as to raise his rifle. But before he could press the trigger, his weapon was pushed aside by Moccasin Bill, who said :

"Young man, take not without cause, and in a moment of passion, the life of a fellow-man. If you wish him to be executed, let him be ; but think you your sister would wish you to be his executioner ? I think not. Stay here, one and all of you. I will perform the office."

They would not dare to disobey him, and he knew it. Beckoning to Deerfoot to follow him, he led him away from the spot—led him to where their conversation could not be heard.

"Deerfoot," said Moccasin Bill, "are you, or are you not, guilty of this charge ?"

"Guilty ! No, no. I have not harmed the White Lily. Why should I ? Listen. *She loves me and I her.*"

On hearing this unexpected avowal, Moccasin Bill was for a few moments silent.

"Well," he then said, "the facts certainly appear against you, but your manner satisfies me that you are innocent. Who could have done the deed ?"

"But one, and that is the chief, Cunning Serpent."

"Likely. Are you on your way to the Indian village ?"

"Yes."

"You will not betray us, if I set you free ?"

"Never, sir, never !"

"Then go," answered the trapper.

And at the same moment he raised his rifle and discharged it in the air. The prisoner of a moment before disappeared in the bushes, and the trapper returned to his companions.

"Is he dead?" was asked.

"Did you not hear my rifle? The rifle of Moccasin Bill is not often fired in vain."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TRAIL OF DEERFOOT.

THE party pressed on.

Night was rapidly waning and morning approaching.

The party had now arrived near the Indian village, and if ever caution, cunning and stealth were brought into simultaneous play it was then.

The situation the village occupied was this: in the direction opposite to that which the party had approached, was a dense wood. Just forward of it was the village, and which stood upon a level piece of ground. At either side was a spot of ground marked by huge ridges, supposed by some to be natural formations, and by others the artificial productions of the ancient mound-builders. These ridges would have offered, no less than the woods, a fair spot for the approach of the trappers; but they had this drawback—they would be likely to be watched.

Accordingly the party chose a more open, though, at the bottom, a far less dangerous approach. This was by making their way up the bed of a dried-up creek, which would not be likely to be suspected by the savages, on account of its open and exposed situation. And for this very account Moccasin Bill had adopted it. Following the creek-bed, they arrived at a spot where the stream course was concealed by a thick growth of hazel bushes, leafless, but sufficiently dense to conceal them from view. The party took advantage of this, and hardly were the men concealed, when the first flash of the morning's sun warned them of the coming day.

The village was astir. Squaws issued from their lodges, proceeded to the woods, from which they soon returned, bearing armfuls of wood. These were thrown in heaps before

almost every lodge, and kindled into a blaze. Over the fires were placed iron kettles, and filled with the mixture which was to serve for their morning's meal.

These proceedings were continued for upwards of half an hour. Then one after another, in rapid succession, the warriors began to appear upon the scene. There was a something in their actions, their mien, which evinced as plain as words would have done, that there was some unusual event to transpire.

It was, as yet, but early. The sun was about level with the tree-tops, and a raw wind was sweeping over the snow, causing the savages to draw their blankets tightly about them as they stalked around.

"Whar kin the chief, Cunning Sarpint be?" queried one of the trappers, who had been an attentive spectator of all that had transpired.

"Dunno," was the answer. "P'r'aps—"

Before he had time to finish the sentence, the deep tones of an Indian gong sounded through the village. At that moment, too, the object of the trapper's inquiry suddenly debouched from one of the lodges. He was in full war-dress; his scalp-lock was ornamented by being entwined by eagle-feathers, and hung down his neck; his face was colored with vermilion and black, and he looked what he was—the fiend.

In the meantime, some of the younger braves had collected together a huge pile of brushwood, the pile being placed not ten rods from the place where the trappers were concealed. The wood had been fired, and about it the warriors were beginning to congregate. They were joined by Cunning Serpent.

The moments flew by. The warriors had taken their seats, and were about to commence their "smoke," when there emerged from one of the lodges three forms. Two of them held between them the third, who, it was plain to be seen, was their prisoner. His garments were torn and ragged, and he was without a blanket to protect him from the cold morning air. His face was painted black.

"Wagh!" said one of the trappers, as he noticed this; "he is doomed, sure'n shootin'."

He was right. The prisoner was sentenced already. The trial for which the savages had assembled was but a mockery—gotten up for the instruction of the younger warriors, and the amusement of the older ones. Such is the nature of the red-man. The fiendish delight which he takes in torturing his victim before the final *coup-de-grace*, is one of his most prominent traits.

As the prisoner advanced, Moccasin Bill scrutinized him closely. To his surprise, he saw through the black paint, which altered the man's features, that it was Deerfoot. His heart leaped within him, and he turned to his companions in order to ascertain if they had also made the discovery. No, they had not. One and all supposed the man to be dead, and, therefore, he was the last one to be suspected in such a position.

The prisoner was placed just without the circle of warriors, still guarded by the two warriors who had brought him thither. The calumet was being passed slowly from mouth to mouth, not a word being uttered to relieve the terrible stillness. This occupied some time, but the "smoke" was at last ended, and the trial (?) commenced.

The chief of the village was the first to speak.

"Warriors! You know why we are here. It is to try a traitor. Uga! What crime is more hateful in the eyes of an Ojibwah than that? None. Ojibwahs! you see the prisoner. His face is painted black, an emblem of what is to come, if he is found guilty. What has the pale-face captive to say? He who was brought up by the Ojibwahs as a son, and who taught him to bend his bow, and with his arrow strike the wild goose on the wing. Let him speak!"

The savage took his seat amid strict silence. The eyes of the warriors, with one simultaneous movement, fell upon the form of the captive, who met their scrutiny with as much composure as if he had been a granite rock, not a solitary movement from him evincing the fact that he felt fear.

Among all his companions, Moccasin Bill was the only one who sufficiently understood the Ojibwah tongue to comprehend what was said. He was cunning enough to foresee that the proceedings would turn to their advantage. He saw that beneath the placid exterior of the prisoner, a strong

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resolution had settled within him, and when the proper moment should come, he would act. The trapper felt this, and he watched the proceedings before him with more interest than ever.

If the savages had expected to hear a reply from the prisoner, they were mistaken. He said not a word, although loud and frequent cries bade him defend himself. But at last these cries ceased, and all eyes were turned upon Cunning Serpent, who had risen to his feet. The eye of the warrior, before he opened his lips, swept the circle of braves, in order to satisfy himself that all were listening attentively. Then, for a moment Deerfoot became the target of his fiendish orbs, which showed forth in that time all the hate which their owner felt for him upon whom they rested.

"Warriors!" he commenced his harangue. "The pale-faced traitor refuses to speak. Why? Because he is guilty. Ugh! His lips refuse to speak the guilt which is in his heart, and they are silent. It may be that he does not know who is his accuser. Let him know it now. It is I, his chief! It is I who say he is a traitor."

"Liar!" ejaculated Deerfoot, loud enough to be heard by the chief, who cast, in answer, a scornful glance toward the prisoner.

"I say, warriors, that he is a traitor. I saw him go inside the fort, and with one of his pale-faced friends. Let the dog deny this, if he will."

The fiend resumed his seat, and once more the eyes of the warriors were turned toward the prisoner. Will he speak? He will; and with an air of defiance, he rises to his feet.

"Warriors! Now that I know who my accuser is, I will speak. He says that I went to the village of the pale-faces and into their fort. It is true."

Here he paused. His declaration was met by ejaculations of surprise. It is probable that not a few had expected to hear the prisoner openly deny the charges against him, instead of acknowledging them.

"It is true. I was in the fort, but how knows the Cunning Serpent what was said? Let him answer that, if he can. Again, I am accused of betraying your plans. What plans?"

I know nothing of them. Show me the warrior who has whispered any in my ear, and I will give in."

His words were short and to the point. For a few moments after taking his seat, there was a deep silence. His unlooked-for words had put his case in quite a different light. This was especially the case with the elder warriors, who now remembered that, when the plot for the destruction of St. James was hatched, Deerfoot was not among them. And, as what had transpired at the council was forbidden to be mentioned to outsiders, the words of Deerfoot, they now saw, were true. He was ignorant himself of their plot.

The elder warriors weighed this, and began to hint their purpose of setting the prisoner at liberty. But here they were opposed by Cunning Serpent and the young braves, who seemed firmly inclined to carry out their original intentions. The debate was loud and violent on both sides, almost, toward the latter part, coming to blows. Suddenly, however, a warrior rose to his feet, and ran hastily toward one of the lodges, which he entered. It was the one belonging to the old hag under whose charge Laura had been placed. The warrior stayed inside the lodge only a few seconds, when he again appeared, grasping the young girl roughly by the arm. Young Hautville's cheek burned as he witnessed this insult to his sister, but caution restrained him, and he kept quiet, eagerly awaiting the *denouement* of this savage trial.

The captive was led forward—forward until she stood, pale and motionless, just without the circle of warriors. She cast a quick glance toward Deerfoot, who, however, did not meet it. But his agitation showed Moccasin Bill that he felt her situation keenly.

"What is the meaning of all this?" whispered Hautville to one of his companions. But his companion was as much in the dark as himself, and he, therefore, said nothing. Only Moccasin Bill was it who knew how matters stood, and knew that the crisis was at hand.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ESCAPE AND A DISAPPOINTMENT.

THE advent of the fair young captive was the signal for silence. This was strictly observed for some moments. Those who had sent for the young girl had evidently done so without any definite object in view, and were now at a loss what to do or say.

Finally Cunning Serpent rose to his feet.

"Why have you sent for a captive, a woman?" he asked, in a scornful tone. "Is it becoming to warriors to admit a woman to the council?"

"No, sir," exclaimed the younger brave. "Away with her."

"True," continued the chief. "Let her return to her lodge."

Again the young braves signified their approval, but in the midst of the cries, their chief waved his arm, commanding silence.

"The white maiden may know what was said at the fort," he said. "Why not question her?"

Cunning Serpent objected to this, and he was backed by a majority of the warriors. The minority gave way. The bringing of the captive was a failure in its results; and she was at once led back to her lodge.

Glances of triumph flashed from the victorious party, and in loud cries they commanded the prisoner to be put to the torture. A few of the elder and more considerate of the warriors were against this, but it was impossible to hear their words above the din raised by the opposite party, and they looked on in moody silence. Two of the warriors ran toward the village, returning with a stake some seven feet in length. They then chose a spot where the snow had been melted by the council-fire, and proceeded to turn up the frozen earth with their tomahawks.

During this, Cunning Serpent had advanced toward the

prisoner, who sat surveying the fearful preparations for his death with a calmness amounting to indifference.

"Ha! ha!" said the fiend, in a low tone. "You see the stake on which the fire shall scorch your flesh has come. And who has done all this? It is I, Cunning Serpent—your chief."

Here he paused, anxious to ascertain what effect his words had produced on him to whom they were addressed. But the face of Deerfoot was as calm and collected as ever. The savage continued:

"You love the White Lily. Ugh! What will become of your love? While your ashes are blown about by the wind, the White Lily will be with me in my lodge."

As the miscreant pronounced these words, he placed his visage in close proximity to that of the prisoner. The time had come. The blanket of the chief was hanging loosely about him, and in his girdle were stuck his knife and tomahawk. Deerfoot, with astonishing ease and rapidity, slipped one of the thongs that bound his hands. His right hand was free! Seizing the knife of the chief from its owner's belt, a hurried blow was aimed at the fiend, and at the same moment he bounded into the air with the agility of a deer. The haste with which the blow was given caused the savage to escape with only a mere scratch, but as Deerfoot came to the ground again, he gave the savage a kick in the pit of the stomach which sent him breathless to the ground.

The prisoner lingered there not a moment, but ran with all his speed toward the forest, some hundred rods away. The savages were not slow to recover from their surprise, and with the exception of four or five, the whole of them, with fearful yells, started in pursuit.

It was plainly evident that the pursued could easily distance his pursuers with one exception, that of a young warrior whose superior speed of foot had earned for himself among his tribe the sobriquet of Bounding Elk. Deerfoot glanced back. He saw that the young warrior must overtake him. This served to increase, somewhat, his speed, and he ran on for some yards farther. Suddenly, he fell heavily to the ground. But he was soon on his feet again. He started forward once more, but his leg dragged behind

him, as if he had sprained or broken his ankle. Again he sunk to the earth, and a cry of victory escaped his pursuers. They felt that he could not escape them now.

The young warrior, Bounding Elk, still kept on. He was far in advance of his companions, and anxious to earn the honor of recapturing the prisoner. Deerfoot calmly awaited his approach. The savage came on with upraised tomahawk, and commanded the prisoner to throw away his knife. Deerfoot at once complied. The useless weapon was flung as far away as possible. Lowering his tomahawk, and holding it loosely in his hand, the young brave approached the prisoner so close that not two feet lay between them. This was his fatal error. With all his cunning, he was no match for the one before him. The lightning is not quicker than the movement of Deerfoot, as he sprung to his feet, dealing the savage a blow in the face which knocked him half senseless to the earth. His tomahawk dropped from his grasp, only to be seized by Deerfoot. A moment more, and it came down with crashing force upon the prostrate savage's skull. Then the hunted man turned and fled once more toward the woods. His ruse had been successful. He might now escape.

Moccasin Bill and his companions had watched these proceedings with the utmost interest.

"There!" Henry Hautville had said, when Deerfoot fell to the earth. "He won't escape, now."

"That," the trapper—Moccasin Bill—had answered, "is I think, by the way he fell to the earth, only a ruse. Had he sprained his ankle in reality, he would not have come to the ground so suddenly."

As we have seen, the trapper was right. In less than three minutes more, both pursuers and pursued had entered the forest, and disappeared from view. And a short time more, their cries died away in the distance. They were now far away. It was the time for another scene—this time a scene of death.

In a body, the trappers rushed from their place of concealment toward the village. They were seen, and loud cries of alarm from the squaws and children greeted their appearance. The several warriors who had not joined the

pursuing party, were, on the first sight of their unwelcome visitors, too much surprised to move. But, perceiving that they numbered over half as many as the enemy, they recovered their spirits and senses, and prepared themselves, in case of a combat, for a stout resistance.

The trappers dashed forward—at first at a run, but soon they decreased their speed to a quick walk. The women and children disappeared inside their lodges. The warriors who were there, gathered together in a single knot, moodily awaiting the near approach of the foe.

The trappers advanced. Not a dozen yards lay between the two parties, when they halted. For a few moments, no one broke the silence on either side. Each party stood eyeing the other, hatred, deadly hatred—being displayed in every look.

Moccasin Bill was the first to break the silence.

“Ojibwahs!” he said, “do not fear us. We are friends.”

The savages felt a shade less uneasy, but they replied not.

“Yes,” continued the trapper, “we are friends. You have a captive here—a young girl. We must have her.”

“My pale-face brother is mistaken,” replied one of the savages; “we have no captives.”

The lie was too evident. The trappers burst into a laugh.

“We are not mistaken. You have the captive I mentioned—the White Lily, as she is called.”

“We have not,” replied the savage, irritated at the mirth of the trappers.

“Red man, your words are like the tongue of a snake. Did we not see the captive maiden when she was led to the council?”

This nonplused the Indian, but it was for a second or two only.

“You did see a white squaw,” he answered, with the utmost of *sang froid*; “but she is not a captive. She is far from the north—she is the wife of Cunning Serpent.”

“Liar!” exclaimed Hautville. “She is my sister.”

“She is! she is!” cried a dozen voices.

“Beckie, quick!” said our hero. “Give her up, or we will search the lodges.”

"Yes," put in one of the trappers, "besides giving ye each half an ounce of lead into the bargain."

The savages replied only by an angry frown. Moccasin Bill waited some minutes for an answer; but, as none was given, he said, in a low, quick tone:

"We've got to fight, so into them, boys."

The words had not died on his lips before the assailants were on the move. Rifles belched forth their deadly contents, and tomahawks made their terrible swoops. The advantage lay on the side of the whites in every way, and they were soon the victors. The last savage lay upon the ground, his crimson blood dyeing the snow around him.

Moccasin Bill and Henry Hautville had noticed the lodge to where and from which the young girl had been taken. So had one or two others; and all rushed in a body toward it. They had pulled aside the robe which concealed the entrance to the lodge, and entered. To their surprise, anger and mortification, *the lodge was empty!*

With the exception of Moccasin Bill, the men rushed from the spot, with the intention of searching the other lodges. As for the trapper, he was not so hasty. It was not the first time in his life that he had been placed in a similar position. He knew to a certainty that it was this very lodge to which the young girl had been taken. Moreover, he was equally confident that she had not left it—that is, by the usual doorway. It must, then, have been done by some other means. He at once proceeded to make an examination.

On the inside of the lodge, on every side to a height of six feet, were hung bear-skin robes, for the purpose of keeping out the cold. The trapper lifted up one of these robes and looked behind it. Nothing met his gaze sufficient to warrant a closer inspection, and he passed on to the next. It was as before. He passed on to the next, then to the next, until he came to the sixth roll. Behind this was that for which he sought. He stepped behind the robe, and knelt down close to the skins which formed the lodge. In them was a rent, some four feet in length, and which had hurriedly been made with a knife.

"Beyond a doubt," he said to himself, on making this discovery, "this is where she passed out."

He passed through the aperture outside. He had expected to find the trail the young girl would leave behind her, but to his extreme disappointment, the snow was so trampled down by innumerable feet having passed over it, it was no more capable of receiving an imprint of a foot than a rock.

By this time, the remainder of the trappers had entered and searched every lodge in the village. Of course, they were still disappointed.

With an angry and troubled expression, the men began to gather about our hero. What must next be done? Moccasin Bill never answered this question. He was about to do so, when a cry reached their ears which at once caused their thoughts to turn in another direction. It was the cry of the warriors. They were returning.

CHAPTER XV.

"HENRY, SAVE YOUR SISTER!"

WE must now go back in our story, and by so doing account for the sudden disappearance of the young captive, Laura.

Standing near the open doorway, the old hag had been a silent and curious spectator of the trial of Deerfoot. She was a witness of his escape, the death of Bounding Elk, and the pursuit of the escaped prisoner. She watched some time after the warriors had disappeared in the forest, and was about to turn away, when her eyes fell upon the advancing body of trappers. In an instant she divined the cause of their visit, and she remembered the words of Cunning Serpent, that if she suffered the captive he had placed in her charge to escape, she forfeited her life. Accordingly, she took immediate precautions to insure the young girl's safe keeping.

Taking from beneath her blanket one of those dangerous weapons carried by the Ojibwah squaws—the *pong-osh*—she started back from the doorway, and bade the captive follow

her. Passing to the side of the lodge immediately opposite the doorway, the hag lifted up one of the bear's-robcs, and she and her companion passed behind it. It took an instant for the keen blade of the pong-osh to make a slit in the lodge, and another for them to pass outside. The lodge was now between them and the trappers. By keeping in a straight line—which the cunning hag took care to do—they could reach the cover of the forest without being seen.

Grasping Laura by the hand, in order that she might not deviate a single step from the path she had marked out, the hag hurried her forward, with terrible threats, if she disobeyed. Unable to account for this strange behavior on the part of her keeper, Laura obeyed. Had she been aware of the near proximity of her friends, she would have made a fierce struggle to escape. But she was ignorant of the fact, and hurried on, with her companion, toward the forest.

This was reached. She knew the warriors in pursuit of the fugitive would not be very long, ere they returned, and here she resolved to secrete herself and her charge until they should do so. Near her was a copse of hazel bushes. She entered this, and bade her companion follow her. Laura obeyed, but before she did so, she cast a glance toward the village. Then, for the first time, was she aware of the presence of the trappers—for the first time did she comprehend the cause of the old hag's sudden flight. But, with the self-possession she had long since acquired, she followed her companion into the hazel copse.

Her thoughts were not idle. She feared that the trappers, not finding her, would soon quit the village, and she dare not warn them by her voice. No, she must first evade the clutches of her keeper, and escape by her fleetness of foot. She cast a side glance toward her, but the hag was keeping a wary eye upon her, still grasping the pong-osh, ready for immediate use, if necessary.

The time was flying rapidly. The young girl dare linger no longer, and, with a suddenness that rather took the old hag by surprise, she sprung upon her, forcing her, by the force of the concussion, over backward. Quick as a flash, the hag thrust forth her lean and sinewy arm, and, with an ejaculation of surprise and anger, grasped the captive girl by the

arm. Laura struggled desperately to release herself, but it was impossible. The scale was about evenly balanced on both sides. Laura was unable to free herself, and the old hag who held her unable to rise to her feet.

This scene continued for some moments, when, to the terror of the young girl, the whoops of the returning savages had reached her ears. If she had been desperate before, she was doubly so, now. A sudden thought crossed her mind. At first she dashed it away, but again it took possession of her, and this time with success. Obedient to it, her taper fingers sought the old hag's throat, and, with the energy lent by despair, she tightly clutched the trachea. The eyes of the woman rolled in a horrible manner in their sockets, and her face rapidly turned black. Had she been able to free herself, she would have forgotten the warning of Cunning Serpent, and felled the young girl to the earth. But, luckily, she was forced to submit; and it was not until the young girl felt her resist no longer that she let go her hold. The hag sunk back, and, alarmed at what she had done, Laura, with a cry of fear, sprung away from the spot.

But scarcely had she passed over a dozen yards, when a hand was laid upon her shoulder with a force that caused her to suddenly stop. She turned round. Her blood turned cold in her veins. Before her, in all his hideousness, was the form of **Cunning Serpent**.

"Ugh!" he said, with a ghastly smile. "The White Lily thought she was free. But no. She is mine yet. Come."

Half-unconscious of her situation, she permitted the monster to drag her from the spot. He hurried her toward a high ridge of ground, just within the edge of the forest, but from where a distinct view of the village was to be seen. Here she was commanded to halt, an order with which she gladly complied. Her thoughts, no longer with the demon at her side, had flown to the trappers. She recognized her brother. In an instant she forgot her situation. With a sudden impulse, she sprung forward.

"Henry! Henry!" she exclaimed. "Save, oh save your sister!"

With a fierce ejaculation, the Cunning Serpent places his polluted hand over her mouth. But it is too late. Her words

have reached her brother's ears. She sees him spring suddenly toward her, but before he has time to take another step, a hand seizes him by the arm, and holds him fast. That hand is the hand of Moccasin Bill! *He it is who restrains him. Why? We shall see.*

CHAPTER XVI

STEEL TO STEEL.

IMMEDIATELY upon being restrained by the trapper, Henry Hautville turned about with an expression on his features impossible to depict.

"What does this mean?" he demanded, in a voice hoarse with passion. "Did you not hear that cry? It is my sister! I must help her."

"I heard all," was the trapper's calm reply. "You can not save her now. It is impossible."

"Devil! Villain! Release me! Quick, or I draw a pistol upon you!"

"As you like," was the trapper's calm rejoinder.

Hardly were the words out of his lips, when, true to his word, Hautville whipped from his belt a pistol. He would have fired it, but, before he could do so, the trapper's left hand knocked it from his grasp. The young man's eyes flashed fire, but he who still held him returned his looks unflinchingly.

"I must have an apology for this," he said.

"An apology! Ha! ha! We shall see. At present, yonder is blood enough for our weapons."

As the trapper spoke, he released his hold of the young man's arm, and pointed toward the forest. Hautville gazed in the direction indicated. The sight turned his blood cold within him. Standing together were the warriors who had returned unsuccessful from the chase of the fugitive, weapons drawn, and wildly gesticulating with their arms. And but for Moccasin Bill, Henry Hautville saw, he would now have

been a dead man ; and in an instant his angry feelings were gone, supplanted by those of *shame* and gratefulness. But he said nothing.

The warriors amounted to nearly eighty—more than five times the number of the whites. As the latter perceived, the odds were fearful.

“ We must find some cover,” said our hero, glancing quickly about him. His glance was not without a shade of uneasiness, for he, perhaps, was, of them all, the most keenly alive to the terrible disadvantages they labored under—both in number and situation.

“ Yes,” said one of his companions, answering to the other’s words, “ we can’t very well keep whar we air. Wagh ! They’d lick us to death, hyur, in a squ’l’s jump.”

“ Those ridges yonder, Bill,” put in another, “ ahint them we mout do some execution.

“ Y-e-s,” answered Moccasin Bill, half doubtfully, half assenting. Then he added, quickly : “ At least, it is a better spot for defense than where we are. For the ridges, comrades, for the ridges !”

Obedient to the cry, the trappers were instantly on the move. The ridges were some hundred or more yards away. But this did not matter much, as the savages were ten times that distance off. They reached the spot with ease.

By this time, the savages were on the move—occasioned by what they supposed to be, on the part of their enemies, a retreat. But the sudden halting, and warlike attitude of the latter, soon showed the red barbarians their mistake. However, they kept on, doubtless with the intention of bringing the conflict to a close as speedily as possible.

Throwing themselves down behind one of the long ridges, the muzzles of their rifles pointed toward the foe, the little party awaited their coming. At length, the savages halted, and just within gun-shot. A short consultation was held between the men, as to whether it was best to fire then, or wait. The latter course was decided upon. Theirs was a situation in which every bullet counted, and one misspent might occasion the loss of another life.

The savages had placed their tomahawks in their girdles, and grasped their bows. Arrows were fitted to the strings,

and a volley discharged. This was a silly move, and the savages perceived it. Protected in front by the high ridge, the missiles whizzed harmlessly over.

"Wagh!" said one of the trappers. "Let's tickle 'em up a leetle, they seem undecided." As he spoke his rifle cracked, and one of the savages fell backward, never more to rise.

The shot—as he who fired it intended it should be—was the signal for the onset. With a fresh outburst of yells, the red demons dashed forward—fury in their mien, murder in their souls. They were met. The deadly leaden bullet checked their progress for an instant, but knowing the dreaded rifles to be now empty, those who had escaped the discharge kept on. But the little band was armed yet. Most of them carried one pistol, if not two, while not a few grasped a deadly Colt. These were quickly brought into play, and with good effect. The savages retreated. For a time victory belonged to the trappers.

The Ojibwahs retreated until they had neared the forest, when they again halted, a wild, vengeful yell escaping them. They were answered by a wild huzza from their enemies, who had, indeed, reason for congratulating each other on the termination of the conflict. A savage can not stand powder and lead, and hence the reason.

"Boys," said Moccasin Bill, pointing to the prostrate bodies of one of the Ojibwahs, "do you see that red-skin, yonder?"

An affirmative reply was received.

"Well, that is their chief. The red demons are now without a leader. It will not be a difficult matter for us to conquer them. What do you say?"

"We agree." "Sartin." "Eavier nor rellin' acrost a log," were a few of the answers.

"Very well; as you are all loaded, let's at them. If they can not stand powder, we'll show them that we can their arrows."

Yelling like the savages would have done, the men dashed forward, halting only when not ten rods lay between them and their foes. A cloud of arrows whizzed through the air, but not until the report of a dozen rifles had been the death-knell of as many savages. Not a man missed his mark.

Another instant, and the combatants closed. For a few moments, the conflict was terrible. If the savages were superior in numbers, they were equaled in hate and resolution on the other side. The savages gave way. They ran like mad for the cover of the forest, still pursued by the band, who resolved to give them no quarter.

Immediately upon entering the forest, a savage was seen to part from the rest, and disappear in a cove of bushes. Hautville, Moccasin Bill, and several others who had seen him, knew him on the instant. It was Canning Serpent. But where was the captive—Laura? He had hidden her, doubtless, in some secret spot. He must be followed, and those who had seen him—four in number—started off at once.

We will return to him who was the object of the pursuit.

The chief no sooner perceived the warriors give way, than he made haste to reach the spot where he had left his captive, in charge of a young warrior. That spot was quickly reached, and, catching the girl in his arms, he ran with all haste toward the river. Once or twice he was about to stop, and throw down his burden, for the footsteps of his pursuers were constantly in his ears. But a glance at the lovely face of his captive, and he kept on.

At length he neared the river, and before him was a high bluff.

His burden was a heavy one, and, strong as he was, the Ojibwah chief staggered under it; but, with a resolution worthy of a hero, he kept on, resolving never to yield. On, on, from rock to rock, until the ascent of the bluff was accomplished, and he stood surveying the scene far beneath him.

His eye fell upon the hated forms of his pursuers. They had not yet reached the bluff. A few moments later, however they would do so, and follow him up it; and, with an expression of alarm upon his features, the chief glanced about him in hopes of finding some avenue of escape.

With beating heart did his fair captive watch him. She, too, perceived the coming of her brother and his companions, and hoped, beyond words, that all escape for the Ojibwah was hopelessly cut off. But her hopes were of short duration,

however. An ejaculation presently escaped the Indian's lips, and again did the young girl find herself in his arms and borne along.

Descending for a short distance the side of the bluff opposite to that he had ascended, Cunning Serpent found himself entering a cleft between two rocks. He made his way rapidly forward. Widening as the chief advanced, the cleft at last came to an end in a somewhat spacious cavern. Huge rocks projected forth on every side, which would have given the cavern, had there been sufficient light, a strangely wild appearance.

Had there been no other outlet to the cavern save that by which the Ojibwah had entered, he might have been caught in a trap. But another outlet there was, and Cunning Serpent knew it. Passing behind one of the rocks which jutted out, the fugitive found himself in an extremely narrow passage, and so low that he had to bend his head as he entered.

He could carry his captive no longer ; and, with a diabolical threat did she dare to disobey him, he took a firm hold of her hand and led her forward.

A few yards were passed over in this manner when the passage came to an end, and captor and captive found themselves once more on the face of the bluff, surrounded on every side with huge bowlders, and some distance from the spot where they had entered the cavern.

Cunning Serpent knew that, for a time, he had thrown his pursuers off the trail. He felt certain that they would track him to the cavern, and supposing him to be secreted there, search the whole of the day. In the mean while, he would remain where he was until the arrival of night, and then take to the woods, where all pursuit, he supposed, would be out of the question.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE LOST TRAIL.

WE will now return to Moccasin Bill and his companions. Reaching the base of the bluff, they at once perceived that the Ojibwah had disappeared. Moccasin Bill immediately came to a halt, and his example was imitated by the others.

"The top of the bluff," said the trapper, looking upward, as he spoke, "is exceedingly rocky, and, on that account, capable of enabling the red-skin to elude us for some time. Besides, if the demon perceived that we would be likely to capture him, he would not hesitate to murder his captive on the spot."

"Well?" anxiously interrogated young Hautville.

"Well, he must be taken unawares. What I propose is—to let him descend the bluff in safety, and then gain the cover of the forest. There, with the trees to conceal our approach, we may, with the help of Providence, be able to effect his capture, and before he can harm her, which he will not do while the slightest hope for himself remains."

"Wagh! Not a bad idea, if this child knows any thing. How long, Bill, will the varmint stay up thar, do ye think?"

"Until night, at least. Depend upon it, he will take to his native element, the forest, at the first opportunity. Until he does, we must follow him no further—no, not a foot."

"What?" exclaimed young Hautville. "Leave my sister in that demon's power for so long a time as that?"

"What can be done? You would not have her murdered?"

"No, no! Oh, God! when will his cursed career end?"

"Wait," answered Moccasin Bill, kindly, "and all will be well."

After some further parley, the little party left the spot, taking care that the Ojibwah chief, should he be on the watch, should not fail to perceive them. They made their way to

the settlement of St. James, and there passed the day, making every preparation for the morrow's chase.

Early the morning following, before the sun had made its appearance above the horizon, a large party were *en route* for the bluff.

Reaching this, Meccasin Bill ordered the search for the trail of the Ojibwah chief to be commenced. Before long, the object of their search was discovered, revealing the fact that the Ojibwah had escaped to the forest, and but an hour or so previously, for the trail was quite fresh.

Delaying not a moment, the band started on the pursuit. They moved with rapidity, for the trail was easy to follow. Ever and anon, one of the trappers would stoop low and scrutinize the tracks of the Ojibwah closely, and the conclusion arrived at by so doing was, that the pursuers were gaining rapidly on the pursued.

They had proceeded for some three miles, when other tracks than those of the Indian became plainly apparent. These tracks, the trailers knew, were those of a woman; and the fact only served to increase their ardor.

Another mile was passed over, when, to their dismay, the band arrived at a spot where the snow, trampled down by innumerable feet, had become as firm as ice. In fact, the spot was no more nor less than what is known in the West as a "deer-yard." It was of spacious dimensions, and as seen from the hardness of the snow, must have been used for some time by the animals whose work it was.

Here, to the great vexation of the trappers, the trail they had been following came to an end. Surrounding the "yard" on every side, the men searched long and carefully for any tell-tale foot-print, but their labor went unrewarded. Foot-prints they found in plenty, but these had not been made by an Indian, and much less by him they sought.

Fully an hour was consumed in this fruitless search, and then the trappers consulted together, in order to decide upon some future plan of action.

"There's one thing plain, boys; the red-skin is cached somewhere near hyar, or else he's left the spot by some way as isn't quite clur to this child's understandin'."

"'Tain't likely the varmint's cached," said another

"What could he do it? I've squinted up every tree in the yard."

"No," said a third, "he's given us the slip. That's plain."

"Comrades," said Moccasin Bill, "there is one way, only, that I can understand how he succeeded in throwing us off his trail. You see yonder tracks?"—pointing to a number of fresh tracks, made by the deer in their exit from the yard. "Well, in my opinion, the Ojibwah followed along the trails of the animals. By following them up we may discover some careless foot-print of the red-skins, which may, also, be enough to put us on the right scent again. One of us will be sufficient to follow the tracks up, the remainder remaining here; for, after all, my conclusion may be incorrect; the Ojibwah *perhaps not having left the yard.*"

This having been decided upon, Moccasin Bill *chose* himself for the mission and departed at once.

The next day he returned, giving but small information of his discoveries; but when he reported that the band must all march with him to consummate a certain thing, they all well knew that he had some "little game" on hand that meant business

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MEETING OF THE FOES.

It took but short time for the band to be on the move, and a still shorter space for them to be lost to sight and hearing in the forest.

Shortly after their disappearance, a figure rose suddenly up from behind a clump of hazels, and with stealthy steps made his way toward a huge oak tree, which stood in the center of the deer-yard. This he was enabled to do with ease, for the fire which had been lit by the trappers still burned brightly.

The figure which so suddenly made its appearance was that of Deerfoot.

When about three rods from the tree toward which his course had been directed, he halted, and crouched down behind a hazel-bush, keeping his eye fixed steadily upon the oak. In that position it would not have been difficult to read his thoughts. The features of his face denoted a mingled feeling of expectation and hate. His lips were set tightly against his teeth, and his brow contracted until the brows almost met.

The expectations of the young man were soon to be realized. Before he had occupied his new position long, a sudden cavity in the trunk of the tree on which his eyes were fixed became visible, and, an instant later, from out the cavity issued the form of a human being—an Indian. Darker than ever was the scowl on the watcher's face, and his eyes fairly blazed. *The Indian was Cunning Serpent.*

On issuing forth from the cavity in the oak, the savage chief listens carefully for a few seconds, and then, with a few quick strides he is in close proximity to the fire. His eye rests upon the ground, which is carefully scrutinized. An instant more and he detects the remains of the deer which had been partially consumed by the trappers. The chief jerks forth his keen scalping-knife, and severs off a piece of the flesh, which he devours raw. No wonder. He is hungry, not having tasted a morsel of food, before that moment, for sixty hours.

He eats until satiated ; then, after throwing another piece of the flesh on the hot coals, returns to the tree. He enters the cavity. A moment later, he again appears, but this time not alone. His hand grasps that of his captive, Laura Hautville. With a gentleness but little in keeping with his savage nature, he leads her to the fire. Then, after inserting his forefinger in her mouth, and drawing forth an object which had been placed there to prevent her from giving the least alarm, he handed her the piece of broiled meat and bade her eat. She willingly complied, being ready to drop with the faintness produced by her hunger.

Things had progressed so far, and Deerfoot had witnessed all with extreme patience, notwithstanding his blood boiled at every movement his deadly enemy made. But here his patience ended, and he prepared to act.

"Ha! Laura, love," he muttered; "fear not, for I am near you. A minute more, and your captor shall feel the sting of my bullet, for, if ever red-skin deserved death, he does."

The Ojibwah chief was standing, at that moment, a few feet apart from his captive, quietly waiting for her to finish her rude meal; and Deerfoot saw that the opportunity for him to finish the chief, before he had time to harm his captive, was a good one.

Knowing that the click of the hammer would be likely to reach the ears of the Indian, unless some care was exercised, the young man placed the hammer under his arm-pit, and succeeded in raising it so that even his own ears could not detect the sound.

A moment more and the weapon was raised to his shoulder. Curious to state, at that very moment Cunning Serpent chanced to glance toward the very bush from which protruded the barrel of Deerfoot's rifle. The eye of the Ojibwah caught the glistening of the polished tube, and with a slight yell of terror, he leaped back.

This move saved his life, for at that instant Deerfoot pulled the trigger, and the rifle belched forth its contents. But, even before the smoke cleared away, the young man perceived that his bullet had missed its mark; and throwing the empty weapon aside, and grasping in its stead one of his pistols, he leaped from out the bushes, and dashed toward his enemy with all his speed.

The distance between the two was decreased to half a dozen yards, when the Ojibwah, with a movement rapid as the lightning, hurled his tomahawk. In his hurry, he missed his aim. The pistol of Deerfoot cracked, and the chief fell heavily to the earth.

But for the presence of her he loved so well, the young man would have drawn his hatchet and split the skull of the red-skin; but he forgot all this, and a moment after, the lovers were in each other's arms.

We will not attempt to depict their feelings, for the reader can better imagine them than they can be described. For some time they stood together thus, conversing in soft words of enchantment, when Deerfoot chanced to glance over his shoulder to the left. To his horror and amazement, he be-

held the form of Cunning Serpent, creeping stealthily toward them. The demon had recovered his tomahawk, and he held it ready to strike the instant it should please him to do so. Fortunately, Laura did not perceive this ; and, with the utmost presence of mind, Deerfoot did not let the slightest movement of his betray to the savage the fact that he was discovered.

Nearer, and still nearer, the Ojibwah advanced, supposing that the lovers were too much engrossed with each other to heed aught else. But a couple of feet only lay between the chief and his intended victim, when the former raised high his hatchet. It would have descended, but before it could do so, the young man turned with the spring of a tiger, and clutched the savage by the throat, the weapon flying from its owner's grasp.

Hatred—deadly hatred—for each other, flashed from the eyes of both the antagonists as they struggled.

The Indian had lost his weapon, but he possessed another—a knife. This was taken from his girdle, but before he had time to use it, a terrific blow from Deerfoot's fist sent him reeling over backward. But the red-skin was as tough as whip-cord, and regained his feet with the utmost celerity. The other carried in his belt two pistols, one of which was empty, having been fired at the Ojibwah a few moments before, and the other loaded. He intended drawing the latter, but in his hurry he was mistaken, and drew forth the empty one. It was not until it was cocked, and the hammer fell with a ringing sound upon the nipple, that he discovered his mistake ; and with an ejaculation of anger, he hurled it with all his force into the face of his antagonist. The blow was effective, creating a large gash in the chief's face, from which the blood flowed in a profuse stream.

But seemingly unmindful of this, Cunning Serpent advanced again, his knife ready for the stab he intended to inflict. Deerfoot saw his danger, and, both in order to avoid it and gain time enough to draw his remaining pistol, he leaped back. It was, for him who executed it, perhaps an unfortunate move. His heels came in contact with a low bush, and he fell over backward.

With a whoop of triumph pealing from his lips, the chief

was upon him before he had time to rise. The knife the Indian grasped was brought into play, and Deerfoot could feel the cold steel as it inflicted a long cut in his left arm. Immediately a feeling of faintness followed, but, with the energy of desperation, he dealt the savage a blow on his arm which sufficed to send the knife a dozen feet into the air.

The young man now felt for his hatchet, but it, like his pistol, had dropped from his belt when he tumbled; and he resolved, on discovering this, to choke his antagonist to death, knowing himself to be by far the more muscular of the two. But this the Ojibwah, writhing like a snake, avoided, but at the cost of every moment receiving in his face a blow from his antagonist's clenched fist.

The encounter did not last much longer. His face swollen dreadfully by the lusty blows Deerfoot was dealing him, and covered with blood from his wound, the Ojibwah, all of a sudden, leaped back, and disappeared among the bushes. But he did not run far before he came to a stand-still. Then, producing a small whistle, made from the femur of of a bird, he applied it to his lips. A shrill sound pealed through the forest, which was repeated for some half a dozen times. Then the whistle was returned to its place of keeping, the Ojibwah muttering, as he did so:

"Ugh! Let the dog of a pale-face wait. Cunning Serpent will show him how he avenges his wounds."

Deerfoot did not attempt to follow his late antagonist, knowing the folly of such a proceeding well. Rising to his feet, he approached the young girl, who had been watching the struggle with feelings terrible indeed.

"Fear not, dearest Laura," he said. "We are safe, now."

"Oh, Deerfoot, your arm. See! It is covered with blood."

"It is nothing. A mere scratch. But are you—"

The question he was about to ask was here interrupted by the sound of the whistle. The cheek of the young man turned somewhat pale, for he knew the import of the sound well. So, too, did Laura Hautville. It was not the first time she had heard it, and she knew it was a signal used by the Ojibwahs when wanting assistance. The lovers gazed into each other's faces for a few moments, and then Deerfoot said, calmly:

"Come, Laura ; we must not linger here. I need not explain why, for, I see, you know already. We must find some place of concealment, for the settlement is too far away for us to reach it to-night."

Recovering his rifle, pistols, and hatchet, and then hurling the tomahawk the Ojibwah had thrown at him as far into the woods as he was able, he took the young girl by the hand, and the two quitted the spot.

Two hours and a half after, they arrived at the base of the very bluff that Laura had quitted when the captive of Cunning Serpent, and which, no doubt, the reader has not forgotten.

As the bluff offered a somewhat safe retreat, Deerfoot resolved to take advantage of it.

By this time, it was nearly morning. Already the eastern horizon had become streaked with gray.

The fugitives were about half-way up the bluff, when the young girl exclaimed :

"Hark ! Deerfoot. Did you not hear that noise ?"

Both halted, for a moment, and glanced back.

Just debouching from the forest, on a run, were the forms of half a dozen Indians, the foremost of them all being the dread chief—Deerfoot's late antagonist !

CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER STRUGGLE.

ABOUT seven miles had been passed over, when the trapper, Moccasin Bill, gave the signal for the band to halt.

"We are not far from the Indian village," he said. "Not more than two hundred rods from here is the spot where I agreed to meet two squaws."

"Two squaws ! Whew ! Then ye have been in thar village ?" inquired one of the men.

"Certainly. In there, and had a good square talk, and made a bargain, too. The squaws are to deliver up a captive girl in

consideration of these gew-gaws"—and forth from his pocket he pulled a lot of bead bracelets. "Woman's vanity, you know!" and he laughed pleasantly at his bargain.

Giving the men a few simple directions, Moccasin Bill took his departure at once, first for the village, to reconnoiter, and then for the trysting-place, where the squaws were to meet and deliver their prize, and receive their price.

Reaching the spot designated, in a maple grove, with his usual caution to guard against surprise, Moccasin Bill selected one of the trees as a hiding-place, and mounted to its branches, where the deep shadows and the night offered perfect concealment, if the squaws with whom he had so mysteriously bargained should try to play him false.

Scarcely had he gained this position, when a rustling of the bushes informed him that some one was approaching. The noise sounded nearer and nearer, and at last three forms emerged into view, coming to a halt directly under the tree up which Moccasin Bill had climbed. The night was dark, and the trapper strained his eyes, as he endeavored to make out whether the three were friends or enemies—squaws or warriors. Finally, he came to the conclusion that they were the two squaws and the captive girl. But he did not at once descend from the tree. Indeed, he was on the point of doing so, but he imagined that a *fourth* party was not far distant, and resolved to maintain his position for a while longer. Nor were his fears without foundation, or mere fancies.

After waiting for some time in silence, the two squaws—for such they were—began to converse together in low tones, they doubtless wondering why the trapper's agreement had not been more punctually observed. Then their conversation ceased, and they waited awhile longer. Again they spoke to each other, and, this time, loud enough for the trapper to overhear them.

"The pale-face has deceived us," said one. "He will not come. His words are not straight."

"Alamona's words are true," said the other. "We must go back to our lodges, for our warriors may miss us."

And, one of them grasping the captive by the hand, they were about to quit the spot, when their progress was interrupted by the appearance of one they had little expected.

This was a warrior, of huge stature, and whose captive the girl was.

He advanced from behind the bush which had hitherto concealed him, until he stood beneath one of the maples, when, with an imperious gesture, he commanded the two to halt. They did so, a slight scream of terror at the same time escaping from each.

Had any one been able to see their faces at that moment, he would have seen depicted there, beyond words, terror and consternation, for each felt that her doom was sealed.

The warrior addressed to them a few stern words, to which he received low, whimpering replies.

How he would have acted next, we know not ; but his attention was withdrawn from the squaws by hearing a noise in the tree, above his head. He looked up, and, as he did so, he received the weight of Moccasin Bill upon his shoulders, the force of which sent him to the ground. It was dark, but his lynx like eyes took in all in an instant. With a wild yell, he sprung to his feet, at the same time drawing his tomahawk. But, the trapper was far the quickest of the two in movement, and the red-skin received a blow on the side of his head from his enemy's clubbed rifle, which knocked him over, dead.

Moccasin Bill turned to the terrified squaws.

"Quick!" he said, in a tongue they well understood. "Go back to your lodges, for, in a few minutes, the woods will be filled with warriors."

The women needed no second warning, but, with an ejaculation of relief, disappeared among the bushes. Then, turning to the young girl, the trapper said:

"Come, Miss Hautville, we must not remain here. Hark! The yell of the Ojibwah reached the ears of those in the village, and they are already on the move."

To his surprise, his answer was:

"You are mistaken, sir. My name is not Hautville."

"Not? Who, then, are you?"

"My name is Clara Staines. I was captured yesterday, and by the Indian you have just killed, who came to our cabin while my father and mother were away at the settlement."

"Indeed!"

"You called me Miss Hautville. Is there any one of that name?"

"Yes. It is she whom I and my companions were after. She is a captive."

"Do you know Henry Hautville?" she next asked.

Of course the trapper replied in the affirmative.

"Are he and the girl you mentioned brother and sister?"

"Yes—brother and sister. Pardon me, but we must go from here. I hear the red-skins coming toward us now. I have friends, not far from here."

Requesting the young girl to follow him closely, the trapper headed for the spot where his companions were anxiously awaiting his return. But, even that brief delay had served to give the savages the field. With amazing quickness seizing torches from their burning fires and wigwams they bounded out in parties of six or seven to *encompass* the designated spot, and Moccasin Bill found, after three or four changes in his course, that he was confronted by his enemies in every possible direction.

Seeing this, his resolution was at once taken. He would await the advance of the Ojibwahs on his front and trust to his skill and the darkness to elude them, and soon they presented themselves to view. They numbered seven, only one of whom carried a burning brand. This torch-bearer was the foremost of the lot, and to pick him off was easy. The rifle spoke. A wild yell followed; the torch fell to the earth, to be at once extinguished in the snow.

Now was his opportunity; so seizing Clara by the hand, like shadows they flitted through the woods undetected, and soon reached the hiding-place of the men.

On seeing the young girl, Henry Hautville, who could not in the darkness, perceive her features, sprung toward her, and clasping her in his arms, he uttered the words:

"My sister!"

To his amazement, the answer was:

"No, Henry, it is not your sister; it is I—Clara."

"Clara!" echoed the young man. "My beloved one! how, in God's name, came you here?"

In a few words she told him all.

Had Clara Staines been any one else than his promised wife, Henry Hautville would have felt the disappointment of not finding his sister bitterly. But, as it was, his disappointment was much mitigated, as he felt how near he had come to losing the young girl he held in his arms.

While this little side-play had been going on, the trappers had assembled in a circle around their leader.

"We have been on the wrong scent," said the latter, "although we have accomplished something. The trail I followed was not that of Cunning Serpent. It is my opinion that he secreted himself in the deer-yard, though where and how, I own up, I can't tell. Hark ! the red-skins are on my trail."

The band did not wait, but leaving a rear guard to pick off the men with torches, the rest pressed on.

CHAPTER XX.

IN A TRAP.

We will return to the lovers, Deerfoot and Laura Hautville.

As we have before stated, when they caught sight of their dusky pursuers, the two were half-way up the bluff.

Lingering not a moment, Deerfoot caught the hand of his *fiancee*, and commenced hurrying upward with all his speed.

The rocks on either side of him were exceedingly rugged, and he saw, to his delight, that they could be ascended to a ledge some twelve feet above, which could be passed along until a projecting rock would hide them from the view of any one standing where they were at that moment—at the entrance of the cavern where Laura had been held by Cunning Serpent.

Clutching hold of the rocks, he drew himself up to the ledge. Then, first obtaining a firm footing, he took off a scarf he wore around his waist, and let one end of it drop

down to his companion. The young girl quickly grasped it, and aiding herself in some degree by her feet, she was drawn up on the ledge. Then Deerfoot led her along the ledge until it obliqued sharply to the left, and they could see the cleft they had just quitted no longer.

Nor were they a moment too soon, for the footsteps of the savages announced that they had reached the passage in the rock, and were hurrying along it.

The moment he came to a halt, Deerfoot began to take in the position in which he had placed himself. The ledge upon which they stood, some four feet in width, ended abruptly, and, gazing down, the young man could see the level ground, some two hundred feet below. Above them, too, the rocks rose up as vertically as the walls of a house, offering not the slightest foothold. In a word, their retreat discovered by their pursuers, they would be in a trap!

Chagrined at this discovery, Deerfoot crept softly back to the angle of the ledge, and peered around the rock. His eye fell upon the savages. They were all there, with but one exception—the Ojibwah chief, Cunning Serpent. Where was he? Had he discovered whither the fugitives had gone? If he had, there was one way, only, by which they could be reached; and that was by approaching along the ledge. But, upon the ledge he was not.

“Laura,” said the young man, returning to her side, “did Cunning Serpent, when he left the cave, do so by the same opening he entered at?”

“No; by a different one.”

On hearing this, Deerfoot at once surmised the reason for the chief's disappearance. Supposing the fugitives to be within the cavern, he had gone to watch the other entrance.

Returning once more to the angle of the ledge, Deerfoot watched the movements of his enemies with as much interest as his situation would allow of. They were stooping down close to the entrance of the cave, and, with their dark orbs, were endeavoring to pierce the gloom beyond. But at length, perceiving nothing which interested them, they rose and consulted together in a tone of voice too low for Deerfoot to overhear them.

The upshot of this was, however, the red-skins suddenly

drew forth their tomahawks, and, in a twinkling, disappeared inside the cavern.

It was some time before they again appeared, but when they did so, an expression of disappointment was to be seen depicted upon the countenance of each. They had searched the cavern thoroughly, but, of course, they whom they were after were not to be found.

Bending until his fox-like face nearly touched the ground, one of the savages scrutinized the tracks of the fugitives with the closest attention for a few seconds ; then, rising to an erect posture, he directed his glance to the side of the passage ; and something he saw drew from him an ejaculation. Approaching close to the very rocks up which Deerfoot had climbed to gain the ledge, the sharp orbs of the savages instantly detected the manner of the fugitive's disappearance, a wild yell breaking from them on the instant the discovery was made. Deerfoot drew back, but, before he could do so, the red-skins had caught sight of his head.

For a time after their discovery, the Indians were inactive, doubtless devising within themselves some means by which the fugitives could be reached.

They knew that this could be done only by walking along the ledge, a thing not one of them was inclined to do, for they well knew the young man was well armed, having been informed of that fact by Cunning Serpent.

Revolving the state of affairs over in his own mind, Deerfoot came to the conclusion that the savages would not approach any nearer, but try what effect starvation would produce. This he was decidedly opposed to, and resolved to begin hostilities himself, and without delay.

Laying his rifle aside, and creeping forward once more to the angle of the ledge, he drew his pistol. Quickly taking aim at one of the Indians, he fired. The shot was effective, the bullet piercing the red-skin's forehead. A second shot followed, at which the savages turned and fled from out the cleft.

Hostilities were, therefore, at once suspended. The young man was not to be dislodged from his position by the Indians, and he was equally unable to drive them from theirs.

But, a good fate was theirs. Moccasin Bill and three of

his companions (after having started the rest of the party for the settlement) visited the deer-yard, and then, with their wonderful knowledge of woodcraft and "sign," read aright the story of Deerfoot's encounter with the savage, and the flight; and, pursuing the very obvious trail, the four men soon came upon the ledge, and at once comprehended the true state of affairs. It confirmed Moccasin Bill's asseveration of Deerfoot's being the man who had rescued Laura, at which the old trapper was delighted: Deerfoot was not her abductor, but her preserver.

The men quickly decided upon the course to pursue.

Approaching close to the base of the bluff, and then skirting round it to the side opposite that up which Deerfoot and his pursuers had ascended, they there halted. Glancing upward, in order to see whether or not the summit was to be gained from that point, the eyes of the trappers almost simultaneously discovered upon the ledge, far above them, the forms of the two fugitives—Laura and Deerfoot. At the same moment, too, the trappers were discovered; and Deerfoot, with a quick gesture, warned the trappers that the red-skins were not far from them.

At that point, owing to its perpendicularity, as before mentioned, the bluff was not to be ascended. A few rods further around the base, however, it was not so, the bluff sloping gradually upward; and the trappers at once took advantage of it.

Their progress was, owing to the great amount of caution used, slow.

As they neared the summit, they found themselves on every side surrounded by huge bowlders, some of which had to be surmounted, before they could ascend higher. They had gained the flat surface of one of these, when Moccasin Bill glanced about on every side, in hopes that the red-skins could now be seen. Nor was he disappointed. Their enemies were seated some few yards away, and a few feet below the level he occupied, calmly engaged in smoking their red-stone pipes. No, not all of them. One there was who seemed oblivious to all around him. The trapper could not see his face, for it was bent low down, but he knew the savage to be the one whose life he had sworn to take—Cunning Serpent, the fiend!

The chief was, in fact, asleep. The excitement of the last two days, during which he had not once closed his eyes, was past, and nature had triumphed in asserting her rights.

"Wait," whispers Moccasin Bill to his companions, who were about to raise their rifles. "The demon seems to sleep."

Stepping forward to the edge of the rock, he cocked his rifle, but, as if now actuated by a different impulse, he did not raise the weapon to his shoulder. But the click of the lock was heard by the savages, except him who slept, and they glanced about them instantly. Their eyes fell upon those standing upon the rock, and, with a simultaneous exclamation of surprise, which at once awoke Cunning Serpent, they sprung to their feet.

"Take the rest," said Moccasin Bill, "and leave the chief to me."

The trappers needed no second bidding; their rifles cracked. Not a man of them missed his aim, and three of their dusky enemies fell to the ground.

Followed by his companions, their leader made a spring which brought him within a few feet of his hated foe.

The Ojibwah, surprised as he had been by the sudden appearance of the trappers, was ready. He had drawn his hatchet, his eyes glistened like those of an angry reptile, his lips were drawn back, exhibiting his teeth, but not the slightest exclamation escaped him. He was, indeed, a horrible picture to gaze upon. The swelling of his face, caused by the pounding Deerfoot had given him, had not yet gone down, and the ugly effect was heightened by the gash in his cheek. His body was bent forward, his glance resting upon the trapper, whom, for more than one reason, he well knew.

Moccasin Bill, on his part, was as well prepared for the struggle as the Ojibwah. Both were men equal in courage and strength, and, to an observer, it would have been difficult to have told which of the two would be the victor.

At that moment, two pistol-shots broke the stillness, and the two remaining savages were among the dead.

The echo of the shots had not ceased among the rocks, when Moccasin Bill and the Ojibwah demon closed. Raising his hatchet, the savage brought it down again with all the force of which he was capable. The handle of the weapon,

as the trapper intended it should, struck the barrel of the rifle which he extended, and the handle of the tomahawk snapped in two, instantly.

The Ojibwah was now at the mercy of his antagonist. The trapper could have shot him dead, but such was not his design. He had another fate in view for him.

So, allowing his rifle to drop to the ground, he extended his arm and clutched the red-skin by the throat, with a grip that, struggle as the fiend did, he could not free himself from. He sought to grasp his knife, but Moccasin Bill was too quick for him. The trapper, with his disengaged hand, flung it as far as he could.

A word from their leader, and the remainder of the trappers came to their leader's assistance; and, a moment later, **Cunning Serpent was a captive.**

An hour later a fearful scene was being enacted upon that side of the bluff on which was the precipice.

Taking from his belt a stout lasso, one of the trappers fastened it securely round the ankles of the captive chief. This done, he was lowered over the precipice until, far below, his head was on a level with the jagged rocks at each side.

Now came the dreadful finale. Swinging the lasso back and forth, the body of the unfortunate savage swung to and fro, at length coming in contact with the rugged rocks with a fearful thud.

Again and again was this repeated, until the sight became too sickening to be continued longer. The mangled body was drawn up until it nearly touched the verge of the precipice.

The lasso was severed by a knife, and the lifeless body dropped like a plummet.

Thus perished Cunning Serpent. His fate may seem a barbarous one, but it did not to Moccasin Bill. To him, the scenes of sixteen years ago, the day on which Henry and Laura Hautville were made fatherless and motherless, were as fresh as if they had been enacted but the day before.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE HAPPY END.

THE trappers, in company with Laura and Deerfoot, that afternoon reached the settlement.

Here they were met by Henry Hautville. Seeing his sister in the company of Deerfoot, the young man forgot her late peril, and even the fact that he had supposed her lover to be dead.

Approaching the lovers, he said, in a voice husky with passion :

"Who are you, that you seem so familiar with my sister?"

"Have I not a right to be?" asked Deerfoot, calmly.

"A right to be? What do you mean?"

Deerfoot was about to answer, but the quiet, yet firm voice of Laura anticipated him.

"Henry," she said, "he is my betrothed husband. We have loved each other long and truly, and nothing in this world would cause us as much pain as a parting would do. I owe him much, and intend to cancel the debt by becoming his wife."

For some moments after this unexpected declaration, Henry Hautville stood confounded. But at last he recovered himself sufficiently to examine the facts in their true light, when he recovered the use of his tongue.

"Well," he said, "having been parted from you so long, Laura, I had hoped to keep you awhile to myself. But, as it is, I wish you both joy and success throughout your lives."

That night, two men were alone in one of the apartments of the fort. They were Moccasin Bill and Henry Hautville.

The former is leaning on his rifle, and surveying, with a troubled expression, the face of his companion.

"Come," he says, "speak. You, Henry, whom I saved

when a child from the power of that demon who perished to-day—you, whom I taught to track the savage and hunt the beaver—tell me how I have injured you?”

For a few minutes after hearing this appeal from the noble trapper, the young man made no reply.

“Bill, my early friend,” he said at last, “until I became acquainted with Captain Treville, I always supposed you to be my best friend. But one day I learned from his lips this—you once loved my mother, and because she rejected you, you became her bitter enemy. Is this true?”

“That I loved your mother,” answered the trapper, “is true; the rest is false. Your mother, Henry, was the loveliest woman I ever saw. We went to school together in far New England, and I loved her as a child. When in her eighteenth year she became acquainted with your father and Captain Treville—both young men of fortune and education.

“She loved Hautville, your father, at first sight, and her love was returned. I loved her, too, and no one knows the effort it cost me to give her up. But I did it, and without a murmur.

“One day, I heard some evil news connected with your father’s name, and casually happened to mention it to Treville. The villain immediately reported it to your father, adding that I was the author of the scandal.

“Immediately upon learning of this base lie, I repaired to your mother’s house, where I met Treville. He was a strong man, but no match for me. I chastised him upon the spot—chastised him until he confessed the wrong he had done me.

“I had had enough of that scene, now that she whom I loved was no more to me, and, with one terrible struggle, I tore myself away. Since then, I have been what I am now, only a trapper.”

Such was the secret of Treville’s dislike for Moccasin Bill. When he had finished, young Hautville grasped the trapper’s hand with a grip of pure, true friendship.

“Well, friend,” he said, with emotion, “I have indeed wronged you. Forgive me—forgive me!”

Reader, our long but pleasant task is almost done. When

we have told you that Deerfoot and Laura were made one, and soon after them Henry Hautville and Clara Staines were joined in holy wedlock—when we have told you that on one of the pleasantest sites on the majestic Minnesota stand, in close proximity, three log cabins, their homes, as well as that of Moccasin Bill—we have said all.

There is not an American youth living who has not, at one time or another, been interested in the life of a trapper ; and if any who reads this story ever goes to the Far North-west, he will not need a better friend or surer guide than Moccasin Bill.

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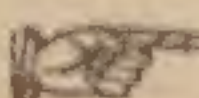
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